



Nursing Resiliency During COVID-19

November 2020

Background

COVID-19 has been part of our daily lives for 11 months and during this time we've watched press briefings, seen our numbers rise and fall (and rise again), paid attention to hospitalization rates and waited to hear details of our ICU/Critical Care numbers. Fundamentally, people have changed the way they live their lives, some have distanced themselves from loved ones, some have lost their jobs, and most are living with increased stress and worry.

Health providers and other essential workers have had to adhere to new regulations at work and at home, while also worrying about taking care of patients/clients/customers in these trying times, all while balancing the increased demands of their home lives with the increased demands and stresses from work. Along with these increasing demands, essential workers still worry about their own health and wellness and that of their families. In August 2020 a report indicating that about 180 nurses had tested positive for COVID-19 was released adding to the mounting stress from home, family and finances.ⁱ Managing the stress and worry that comes with living in perpetual uncertainty in multiple areas of life (work, home, family, financial etc.) takes a toll.

For all health providers, and perhaps most especially nurses, we know that no matter how long the road behind us is, the road ahead still stretches beyond what we can see. We know that we can't be complacent and there is no such thing as a return to "normal." Instead, we will have to accept a world that includes COVID-19 into the foreseeable future, and we have no real idea of what happens beyond that. Clearly, the direction from leaders such as Dr. Bonnie Henry and an army of nursing experts in infection control and population health who advise us all to continue to practice good hand hygiene, physical distancing, staying home when we're sick, covering our coughs and sneezes and ensuring that we remain vigilant in looking out for and protecting the most vulnerable in our society, are wise words and most people have willingly complied with public health orders.

Yet, cases continue to climb, and a general sense of weariness has set in for many people, not the least of which are nurses who have maintained their high level of care and expertise since the start of this pandemic 11 months ago. Nurses continue to be at the point of care for COVID-19, not only treating the sick but as members of public health teams, as part of immunization clinics, working 811 and do so while continuing to maintain the public trust by providing safe, competent, ethical and evidence-based care. The burden and stress are intense and ensuring nursing resilience is critical in a complex health care environment, particularly in BC where we are focused on the dual public health emergencies of COVID and the Opioid Crisis.

Resilience is loosely defined as an ability to face adverse circumstances while being able to remain focused and optimistic about the future.ⁱⁱ Burnout, stress, compassion fatigue, and global pandemics take their toll on this resilience and nurses need to be supported in order to maintain this resiliency. The nursing [Code of Ethics](#); outlines 'ethical' (or moral) resilience as the "capacity of an individual to sustain or restore their integrity in response to moral complexity, confusion, distress or setbacks" within their practice.ⁱⁱⁱ

Unfortunately, the pandemic has created a 'new normal' and nurses will need to learn how to find ways to reduce the impact of this new normal on our daily practice. More broadly speaking nursing knows that as a system it is imperative that we focus on ensuring that resilience is supported. Numerous studies indicate that nursing resilience is supported in work environments that recognize the contributions of nurses to global health, and by encouraging and empowering nurses to find ways to restore balance and promote mindfulness when confronted with ethical challenges.^{iv} Building this resilience is a function of leadership, collaboration and a crucial ability to ensure that the larger meaning of the work that nurses do is celebrated and cultivated. Grand gestures are not required in these cases, what is important is that our systems must recognize the personal toll that stressful and complex ethical situations create, a recognition that is foundational to ensuring that resilience can be fostered. Empowering nurses with the skills and confidence to manage complex ethical situations also helps them build greater resilience. We need to ensure that this message is repeated as often as it needs to be in order to make sure it is heard in these complex and challenging times.



Key Messages

- NNPBC recognizes that COVID-19 has created an unprecedented increase in mental health distress amongst the general public as well as in health professionals.
- No matter how difficult the challenge, nurses continue to maintain the public trust by providing safe, competent, ethical and evidence-based care.
- NNPBC recognizes that nursing resilience is critical in a complex health care environment, particularly in BC, where we are focused on dual public health emergencies (COVID and the Opioid Crisis).
- Nurses continue to be central at the point of care for COVID-19, not only treating the sick but as members of public health teams, as part of immunization clinics, and as part of the team working 811 lines
- Burnout, stress, compassion fatigue, and global pandemics can take an enormous toll on nurses, and they need to be supported in order to maintain their resilience.
- In order to build moral resilience and to empower nurses with the skills and confidence to manage complex ethical situations we need leadership, collaboration and sustained confidence that the work we do is considered meaningful.
- In times of global crisis such as a pandemic, efforts to build and sustain the resilience of the nursing workforce should be a public priority.

Tools

Wellness Together Canada

A joint initiative by Stepped Care Solutions, Kids Help Phone, and Homewood Health, Wellness Together provides free mental health and substance use resources, a community of support, and counselling with a mental health professional.

Psychological First Aid

The BC Psychological Association, in partnership with NNPBC, is providing health care providers with Psychological First Aid – “a brief (up to 30 minute) telephone consultation to provide you with information and strategies to help you cope with the stress associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Care for Caregivers

The Canadian Mental Health Association and SafeCare BC have partnered to provide excellent resources especially for healthcare workers. “Whether you’re looking for up to date credible information to ease your mind, a free workshop to learn about resiliency, or quick daily coping tips, it’s here. This site provides a diverse collection of quick and easy resources to support your mental health.”

Virtual Mental Health Supports for Healthcare Workers

A number of virtual services including phone and text-based peer support.

Here to Help

Here to Help provides mental-health and substance-use information, including self-screening tools and referral information.

BC Crisis Centre

If you are in crisis, distress, or having thoughts of suicide, help is available – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, call 1-800-784-2433 (1-800-SUICIDE), or call your local crisis centre.



Anywhere in BC 1-800-SUICIDE: 1-800-784-2433

Mental Health Support Line: 310-6789

Vancouver Coastal Regional Distress Line: 604-872-3311 Sunshine Coast/Sea to Sky: 1-866-661-3311

Online Chat Service for Youth: www.YouthInBC.com (Noon to 1am) Online Chat Service for Adults: www.CrisisCentreChat.ca (Noon to 1am)

Apps to support mental health & wellbeing

- [MindShift CBT](#)
- [Breathr Mindful Moments](#)
- [Ten Percent Happier Coronavirus Sanity](#)

Websites for more information about managing mental health during COVID-19

- [Anxiety Canada](#)
- [CMHA](#)
- [CAMH mental health for health professionals](#)

Further Reading/Resources

- [Canadian Nurses Association, Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses](#)
- [Canadian Nurse Magazine. "Building Moral Resilience Into Nursing Practice"](#)
- [Building moral resilience to neutralize moral distress by Cynda Rushton.](#)
- [RNAO: "Preventing and Mitigating Nurse Fatigue in Health Care"](#)
- [NNPBC Issues Summary: "COVID-19 – Dealing with the Complexities of Ethical Decision Making & Moral Distress"](#)
- [BCCDC: "COVID-19 Ethics Analysis: What is the Ethical Duty of Health Care Workers to Provide Care During COVID-19 Pandemic?"](#)

Please feel free to direct questions and additional comments to info@nnpbc.com.

ⁱ Medicine Matters. [GROWING NUMBERS OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS WITH COVID-19](#)

ⁱⁱ [Nurse Management. "Building Nursing Resilience"](#).

ⁱⁱⁱ [CNA Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses](#)

^{iv} [Building moral resilience to neutralize moral distress by Cynda Rushton.](#)