Coventry University
Faculty of Health & Life Sciences
Talking about ‘compassion’ in health care: do we know what we mean?

A qualitative exploration of academic, clinical and lay perspectives.

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Introduction and Outline of Presentation

• The ‘Crisis of Compassion’
• ‘Compassion in Practice’ Strategy (DOH 2012): core values and behaviours.
• Values Based Recruitment
• Defining ‘Compassion - a complex, subjective and poorly articulated phenomenon (Sturgeon 2010).
• Aim of presentation - to report on research to examine the concept of compassion with a view to the development of a Compassion Measurement Tool'.
Study Aim and Objectives

Use literature based and empirical data to investigate the concept of ‘compassion’ such that the concept can be clearly described and defined, and using this understanding to develop a formalised ‘measure of compassion.

Study Objectives:
1. Explore subjective meanings of the concept of compassion
2. Identify existing measurement tools relating to ‘compassion’
3. Devise and pilot a formal measure of compassion
Study Methods

• Qualitative element (in addition to SR and NGT and later pilot/testing of measure)
• Nine focus groups with 45 participants
• 42 women, 3 men
• 12 students, 13 University staff, 10 clinical, 10 members of the public
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Defining Compassion</td>
<td>Innate emotion&lt;br&gt;Feeling of Empathy&lt;br&gt;Positive interpersonal interactions&lt;br&gt;Force for action&lt;br&gt;Altruistic quality</td>
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<td>Compassionate Behaviours</td>
<td>‘Core’ communication skills and behaviours&lt;br&gt;Non-verbal communication&lt;br&gt;Personal engagement&lt;br&gt;Sustaining positive relationships&lt;br&gt;Delivering on promises&lt;br&gt;Consistently compassionate</td>
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<td>Barriers to Compassionate Practice</td>
<td>Lacked sufficient time&lt;br&gt;The ‘system’&lt;br&gt;Care without engagement&lt;br&gt;Burnout</td>
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<td>Solutions to Uncompassionate Practice</td>
<td>Strong leadership&lt;br&gt;Positive role Modelling&lt;br&gt;Education</td>
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Figure 1: Framework for Compassionate Inter-Personal Relations

STAGE 1
CONNECTING

STAGE 2
Recognising FEELINGS

STAGE 3
BECOMING MOTIVATED

STAGE 4
TAKING ACTION TO HELP

STAGE 5
SUSTAINING RELATIONSHIPS
Conclusions

• Participants held clear expectations regarding practitioners’ communication skills and used these as a proxy for compassionate practice.
  - style of communication,
  - developing positive interpersonal relationships
  - level of personal engagement.

• Care given without personal engagement viewed as non-compassionate.

• The ‘Framework for Compassionate Inter-Personal Relations’: stimulus for personal learning.

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