
Burnout for Transplant Nurses



According to a study published by researchers at Henry Ford Hospital, over half of nurses who work with organ transplant patients in the U.S. experience high levels of emotional exhaustion. The findings are published in *Progress in Transplantation*.

The study was led by senior staff psychologist Michelle Jesse, Ph.D, liver transplant surgeon Marwan Abouljoud, MD, senior staff psychologist Anne Eshelman, PhD, and registered nurse and Transplant Institute Administration Manager Kathleen Hogan. Data from 369 transplant nurses working across the U.S. through online surveys distributed by the International Transplant Nursing Society were evaluated.

The study showed that approximately 52 percent of the nurses surveyed reported low levels of personal accomplishment. Around 16 percent of transplant nurses indicated that they try to emotionally distance themselves from their patients which is a common reaction by those who feel overwhelmed in stressful situations. Such distancing can often be misconstrued as indifference to patients.

"At the end of the day, the nurses spend the most time with the patients and wear all the hats in a health system," says Dr. Jesse. "Plus, transplant nurses work really hard trying to get their patients listed to get a transplant, they get to know the family and sometimes it doesn't work out. And that's really tough. They're just an incredible group."

A previous study about transplant surgeons conducted by the Henry Ford Hospital team also found that organ transplant surgeons had a low sense of personal accomplishment. Nearly 40 percent of the respondents reported feeling emotionally exhausted.

Dr. Abouljoud, director of the Henry Ford Transplant Institute explains that transplantation is a high-pressure specialty and the feelings of burnout commonly felt in medicine can be particularly intensified in this specialty. He highlighted the need to develop systems that would be able to prevent this from happening. The study findings also indicate a need for transplant centres to create an environment that nurtures both patients and caregivers.

"It has to be more than on an individual level," she says. "It has to be to the unit, the institution, the larger environment: promoting collegial work environments, coaching for encounters with difficult conversations, and ensuring efficient processes and call systems for off-hours."

Source: [Henry Ford Health System](#).

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