

Emergency Nurses Susceptible to Death Anxiety



The nature of their work and daily exposure to death and other mortality cues make emergency nurses highly susceptible to death anxiety, according to a paper published online in the journal *Emergency Nurse*. Death anxiety, or "thanatophobia", is a state in which people experience negative emotional reactions in recognition of their own mortality.

Nurses working in emergency settings should be made aware of the risks of this debilitating psychopathology and given access to interventions to prevent it from affecting their physical and mental health, writes Mike Brady, PhD candidate, Swansea University (Wales, UK), and author of the journal article.

Amongst the interventions suggested by the author are:

- Death education programmes: These could help to reduce levels of death anxiety by preparing nursing students and nurses to confront their beliefs about death.
- Occupational risk-assessment tools: Healthcare workers involved in critical incidents should be assessed against a trauma risk-management tool.
- Job rotation: Staff involved in organising rotas should also try to rotate emergency healthcare workers so that they are not overexposed to mortality cues.

In addition, the author cites the importance of conducting more research to explore the incidence of death anxiety among emergency workers.

"While many emergency nurses and paramedics may be unaware of death anxiety, they are exposed to it in their everyday practice. Healthcare providers, university staff and employers must understand and try to prevent the development of this potentially debilitating psychopathology to improve the health of their staff and the care of patients," the author concludes.

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