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## More Self-Compassion Means Better Care Quality



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Healthcare Assistants (HCAs) with lower levels of self-criticism and higher levels of self-kindness deliver better outcomes for patients. Such are the results of a new research from [Christchurch Group](#) – the UK’s provider of award-winning neurorehabilitation services – led by the Group’s Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist, Dr Julianne Kinch.

The research, ‘Self-Compassion, Compassionate Care and Compassion Fatigue in Brain Injury Residential Healthcare Assistants,’ is the first to directly examine the two-way relationship between self-compassion and care quality in neurorehabilitation.

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Commenting on the study, Dr Kinch suggested that the mindset of the care worker defines the quality of care delivered. “When the effective delivery of care becomes compromised by compassion fatigue or burnout, there are repercussions for both staff member and patient; with lower levels of patient satisfaction as well as increased absenteeism and higher turnover,” she said.

For the study, 75 HCAs (non-clinically qualified care workers) from residential rehabilitation facilities completed the Professional Quality of Life Scale, the Self-Compassion Scale, and a socio-demographic questionnaire. Most participants showed average levels of compassion satisfaction, burnout and secondary traumatic stress. In post-acute rehabilitation the levels of burnout and secondary traumatic stress experienced by the staff were higher than in slow-stream rehabilitation. Scores on measures of self-kindness and self-criticism were in the moderate range.

It was found that HCAs’ higher levels of self-kindness (positive constructs of self-compassion) were related to greater levels of compassion satisfaction that they derive from doing their job. In the meantime, higher levels of self-criticism (negative constructs of self-compassion) corresponded to greater levels of burnout and secondary traumatic stress/compassion fatigue. That is, the more critical an HCA is of themselves, the more likely they are to experience burnout and secondary traumatic stress as a result of their interaction with patients.

The research highlighted the need to both develop compassion for self and to reduce self-criticism to enhance occupational well-being. The authors suggested that compassion focussed staff training would help to increase the levels of compassion satisfaction at work. Furthermore, training aimed at reducing self-criticism, isolation and negative ruminations, will result in lower levels of staff burnout, secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue. Both will improve patient health outcomes.

Recognising the difficulties faced by health and social care workers in 2019, Chief Operations Officer at Christchurch Group, Ruth Smith, underlined the importance of supporting research, which prioritised the staff’s “unique needs in increasingly challenging roles”, and of investment in staff training and development, which is ultimately beneficial for both patients and staff members.

Source: Christchurch Group  
Image credit: Christchurch Group

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