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Art Therapy Approach to Burnout Reduction for Hospice and Palliative Care Workers

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INTRODUCTION
Hospice and palliative care workers are at a high risk for job burnout due to the intensive emotional labor of their jobs. Supervision or employee assistance programs can reduce this risk (Krivits, McCullough-Black, Grant & Kirk, 2010; Perera, Fonseca, & Carvalho, 2011; Swett, Harrington, Matsuyama, Shanafelt & Lyckholm, 2009). One particularly encouraging strategy in this area has been the incorporation of art therapy (Brooks, Bradt, Eyre, Hunt and Dileo, 2010; Italia, Favara-Scacco, Di Cataldo & Russo, 2008; Nairn, 2009). The art therapy approach to burnout reduction aims to enhance self-awareness, increase ability of emotional expression and regulation, promote professional relationships and facilitate meaning making processes.

OBJECTIVES
Art therapy based supervision with hospice and palliative care workers would
- lower incidences of burnout
- increase perception of professional efficacy
- facilitate more self-care and building professional relationships.

METHODOLOGY
We examined the efficacy of the art therapy based supervision program with social workers, nurses, doctors, chaplains and volunteers who work in hospice and palliative care settings. A standard supervision group of the same length and course topics served as a control group. Participants selected which supervision group to attend. All participants completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory - General Survey (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996) and Five Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer & Toney, 2006) at pre, post and 1 month intervals.

RESULTS
The study was a pilot stage and data collection is on-going (expected completion of June 2012). This presentation only reports on the findings from the post and one month of the art therapy based supervision group compared with the first control group. 21 participants completed the art therapy based supervision while 23 participated in the control group.

Quantitative Data
Paired T-test was used to examine the data.

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<th>Control</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>1 month</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonreaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>19.5</td>
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<td>3.5</td>
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Five Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire
Similar results were found with regard to mindfulness. Participants in the control group showed significantly lower levels of abilities to describe their thoughts and feelings (p < 0.05), as well as, not reacting to them (p < 0.05). Participants in the art therapy based supervision showed a significant increase in their abilities to observe their thoughts and feelings (p < 0.05).

Qualitative Data
Reflective writings and group discussion revealed that the art-making processes helped participants reconnect with themselves and colleagues, while gaining a new understanding and new perspectives of challenging experiences at work.

DISCUSSION
This study showed preliminary evidence for the efficacy of art therapy based supervision on job burnout. The results imply that participants might have gained a better sense of control of their thoughts and feelings, which might have contributed to their increased level of professional self-efficacy and reduction of exhaustion. Further, the group allowed for increased self-awareness, discovery of creative potential and forming connections with colleagues.

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REFERENCES

For the control group, both core dimensions of job burnout — exhaustion and cynical attitudes towards work — were measured. Supervision (p < 0.05) and art therapy (p < 0.05) were found to be significantly lower than the control group at pre, post and 1 month intervals.

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