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Examining the Compassion Status of Healthcare Professionals Working in Palliative Care Units

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Objectives: Compassion in palliative care includes spending time with the patients, establishing empathy, caring about and respecting the patients and helping the patients manage the hospital environment. In the literature, there is no study in the palliative care service where the sense of compassion needs to be reflected in the most distinct way possible. This study was conducted for the purpose of examining the compassion status of healthcare professionals working in palliative care unit.

Methods: Sample of the study consisted of 81 healthcare professionals working in two training research hospitals and a public hospital in İstanbul. The data of the study were collected with "Sociodemographic Characteristics Form" and "Compassion Scale" in January and February 2019. The data were evaluated using descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis, T Test, and Pearson's Correlation Test and comparison studies were conducted.

Results: 65 (80.2%) of the participants were nurses, 12 (14.8%) were doctors and 4 (4.9%) were health staff members. The participants had an age average of 28.07±7.27 years. 58 (71.6%) of the participants were female and 58 (71.6%) were married. There was a significant difference between the compassion scores (ZMWU=-2.470; p=0.014), kindness scores (ZMWU=-2.788; p=0.005) and indifference scores (ZMWU=-2.473; p=0.013) of the healthcare professionals according to their gender. There was a significant difference between the compassion scores (ZMWU=-2.197; p=0.028); kindness scores (ZMWU=-2.467; p=0.014), and conscious awareness scores (ZMWU=-2.664; p=0.008) of the participants according to their status of having children. There was a significant difference between the compassion scores (t=4.128; p=0.001), kindness scores (t=4.079; p=0.001), separation scores (t=-2.884; p=0.006), conscious awareness scores (t=4.312; p=0.001), indifference scores (t=-2.436; p=0.018), disengagement scores (t=-2.685; p=0.009) of the healthcare professionals according to their perception of interpersonal relations. There was a positively weak correlation between the age averages and total compassion scores (r=0.253; p=0.022) and conscious awareness scores (r=0.278; p=0.012) of the participants. There was a positively weak correlation between the occupational years and compassion scores (r=0.298; p=0.007), conscious sharing scores (r=0.246; p=0.027), and conscious awareness scores (r=0.276; p=0.013) of the participants. There was a positively weak correlation between the weekly working hours and conscious sharing scores (r=0.309; p=0.005) and disengagement scores (r=0.256; p=0.021) of the participants.

Conclusion: There are many factors that affect the feelings of compassion of healthcare professionals who work in palliative care especially with patients in the end-of-life period. Personal and occupational characteristics of individuals affect their sense of compassion toward patients. It is important for healthcare professionals to know these factors that affect their own sense of compassion and control their negative features.

Keywords: Examining the compassion, palliative care units, healthcare professionals