

# The Use of Creative Expression to Reduce Burnout and Work-Related Stress in Healthcare:

## A Literature Review

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### Clinical Problem

- Rates of burnout among healthcare professionals range from 33% in nurses to over 50% in physicians and residents.
- Burnout can lead to an increase in:
  - Medical errors
  - Patient mortality
  - Spread of hospital-acquired infections

### Purpose

- There is a substantial amount of literature about the successful use of art therapy and creative expression as a coping strategy for patients.
- It is hypothesized that healthcare professionals can use creative expression to cope with work-related stress and reduce rates of burnout.
- The purpose of this review of the literature was to explore the use of art and creative expression as a method for healthcare workers to cope with work-related stress and decrease burnout.

### Methods

- The Search Everything box on Falvey Memorial Library's web site was used (<https://library.villanova.edu/>).
- The "Search Everything" option was changed to "Articles and More" to search the key words: "creative expression and nursing," and "art and nurse burnout."
- Limitations were: English language, the years 2009-2019, United States publications, and peer-reviewed journal articles.
- Fourteen studies were included in this review.

### Literature Review

#### Key Findings:

- A team of hospice caregivers in an experimental group involving group quilt-making showed a statistically significant decrease in pre-test to post-test scores on the Maslach-Burnout Inventory (MBI). (Salzano, Lindemann, & Tronsky, 2013)
- In a New Mexico hospital, artists traveled to various units for creative sessions with staff. Interviews with participants post-intervention were positive. (Repar & Patton, 2007)
- A ten week-long silk painting activity for nursing staff yielded positive qualitative and quantitative results. The intervention group reported an improvement in health and wellbeing, a sense of happiness, and work productivity. The quantitative results showed improved scores in the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale and Short Form—36 Health Survey questionnaire that were not statistically significant. (Karpaviciute & Macijauskiene, 2016)
- In a multi-institutional exploratory study, art-viewing and art-making sessions were offered on a monthly basis. There were no significant differences in ProQOL scores over the course of the study. However, there was a discrepancy between the participants' discussions about work stress and their scores on the ProQOL. Post-intervention interviews showed that art-making allowed participants to acknowledge emotions related to work that they had not previously recognized. (Huet & Holttum, 2016).

### Discussion

- Data from qualitative and mixed-methods studies (n=6) described positive outcomes related to the use of creative expression to decrease feelings of work-related stress.
- Quantitative and mixed-methods studies (n= 11) demonstrated no significant difference (n=6); and a statistically significant difference (n=5) in post intervention outcomes.

### Conclusion and Future Considerations

- Since it can take time for burnout to improve, long-term outcomes of the effectiveness of expressive art to reduce work-related stress and burnout in healthcare workers need to be evaluated.
- Based on the findings from this review, healthcare agencies should consider implementing arts-based intervention programs to reduce employee burnout.

### References

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Additional references available upon request