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From Compassionate Fatigue to Compassion: A new direction of improving quality of life for healthcare professionals in reproductive health

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### Background and Objectives

Reproductive healthcare professionals, dealing with heavy caseloads and patients with fertility problems, are usually working under pressure. Recent research has not only focused on managing compassion fatigue (CF) but also enhancing compassion satisfaction (CS) for the quality of life among helping professionals, in which the concept of CS refers to the pleasure derived from doing healthcare work. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of a professional development program on enhancing CS.

### Design

This is a quasi-experimental study. Healthcare professionals specialized in reproductive medicine were recruited to attend a nine-session professional development program which composed of compassionate mediation, self-reflective exercises and mindfulness. Before ( $T_0$ ) and after ( $T_1$ ) the program, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire.

### Setting

The program and the assessments were conducted at the University of Hong Kong.

### Participants

Twenty-five healthcare practitioners including nurses, gynecologists, obstetricians, social workers and embryologists were recruited from 11 licensed ART clinics in Hong Kong.

### Main outcome measures

The questionnaire contained Professional Quality of Life (ProQol) measuring CS and CF as well as other validated measures of psychological wellbeing.

### Results

Despite of insignificant change in CF score in term of Burnout and Secondary Trauma, participants reported significant increase in CS score after completion of the program ( $T_0:33.94\pm4.4$ ;  $T_1:36.35\pm3.82$ ,  $t=-3.29$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Moreover, younger participants and those have worked longer in medical field ( $t=-5.196$ ,  $p<0.035$ ) but shorter in ART setting ( $t=-3.042$ ,  $p<0.014$ ) reported bigger difference. Furthermore, participants who had

religious belief ( $t=-7.071, p<0.002$ ) and lower education level ( $t=-3.45, p<0.014$ ) also demonstrated significant improvement in CS.

### Conclusions

Regardless of the constant CF score, the professional development program was an effective tool to enhance practitioners' CS and hence improve their quality of life. Enhancing CS provides a positive perspective in cultivating satisfaction and also positive feeling in healthcare profession. It is expected to prevent burnout and improve quality of healthcare service in the field of ART. This study shed light on the development of future training program for healthcare practitioners.