The Impact of Compassion Fatigue on Veterinary Professions During Emergency Response: The New Zealand Experience

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Overview of Presentation

• Identify support structures/mechanism currently in place on Compassion Fatigue (CF) for Vet professions in New Zealand
• Collaboration with Wildbase, Oil Spill team and Vet School at Massey University to address:
  – Compassion Fatigue
  – Veterinary students’ wellness
  – Animal Abuse and Family Violence

Background

• Aotearoa New Zealand has experienced three major disasters, which have seriously impacted animal welfare
  – Two Christchurch earthquakes
    • 7.1 on 4 Sept 2010
    • 6.3 on 22 Feb 2011
    • Both have caused over 30,000 animals to perish (Glassey & Wilson, 2011)
  – Oil Spill from a container ship in Tauranga (East Coast of North Island) in 2011
    • Killed over 2,000 birds (Hill, 2012)
• Animal Rescue Unit (ARU), Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), Massey University’s Veterinary Emergency Response Team and its Wildbase Oil Response Team played major roles in rescues, along with rehabilitation and release of animals
The Cost to Caring

Veterinary professions, along with other health care professionals, may experience burnout and compassion fatigue as a result of continued exposure to the traumatic events. Risley-Curtiss, Holley and Wolf (2006) recommended that social work profession should collaborate with other disciplines to build its knowledge based regarding the animal-human connection to support the professionals and volunteers involved with this care.

Forming Partnership

- Animal abuse & family violence
- Vet student wellness

- School of Social Work

- Compassion fatigue
- Peer supervision

- Vet School

- Wildbase Team
What’s already available in NZ?

- Vets Wellbeing Booklet by New Zealand Veterinary Association
  - Vet Curriculum at Massey University
    - Implementing Veterinary Professional Skills involving communication and reflection (e.g., dealing with euthanasia, dispute and conflict resolution) & Physical and mental wellbeing (e.g., work-life balance, mindfulness) (Gordon, 2015)
    - Seminars on animal cruelty & family violence – Guidance for Vets
  - Incorporating Compassion Fatigue in Curriculum & Professional Training & Development
    - Conversation with Bridey White from Wildbase on
      - Why compassion fatigue is a key issue to Vet and Wildbase people
      - Her reflection on presenting compassion fatigue to different groups

What’s been implemented in teaching and training?

-兽医学院课程
  - 实施兽医专业技能（例如，处理安乐死、纠纷和冲突解决）及身体和心理健康（例如，工作与生活平衡，正念）（Gordon, 2015）
  - 动物虐待及家庭暴力研讨会—兽医指导
  - 在课程和专业培训中纳入同情疲劳
    - 与Wildbase的Bridey White的对话
      - 同情疲劳是兽医和Wildbase人员的关键问题
      - 她在向不同群体介绍同情疲劳时的反思
Challenges faced in Rena Oil Spill – Supporting Staff, Volunteers & Local Community

• Building a trusting and sustainable relationship with Tangata Whenua (Maori – Indigenous people in NZ) in disaster management

Who is responsible for managing CF?

Whakatauki (Maori Proverb)
He korowai āta raranga
He korowai whakaruruhau, Mō tātou katoa

“A carefully woven cloak is a protective cloak for us all”
Independent Taskforce on Workplace Health and Safety

We are all responsible for managing our stress and dealing with Compassion Fatigue.
Social Work Students on Placement

(Left) Susanna Robinson (Master of Applied Social Work student – final placement) – presented a workshop on compassion fatigue to vet residents, vet technicians and vet nurses
(Middle) Bridey White (Research Team Member from Oil Response, Wildbase) – provided support for our social work students on placement
(Right) Jessica Verryt (Bachelor of Social Work student – 4th year final placement) - conducted a vet students wellness survey, worked with Bridey to present compassion fatigue to 3rd year Bachelor of Vet Technician students, co-facilitated two workshops: 1) developing mental health strategies for vet students and 2) using peer-supervision to address burn-out and compassion fatigue to Wildbase residents with Polly.

Vet Students Wellness Survey

(Yeung & Verryt, 2015)

**Purpose:** Focus on the experiences of vet students to explore the changes in lifestyle and wellbeing during their vet training journey

**Methods:** A cross-sectional design, using an online questionnaire to survey year 3, 4 and 5 vet students in August 2015

**Results:** 123 out of 300 students responded (41%)

Key question: Good mental health is a pre-requisite for success in the Bachelor of Vet Science Programme & Vet profession

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<tr>
<td>BVSc Programme</td>
<td>112 (90%)</td>
<td>216 (94%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vet Profession</td>
<td>117 (94%)</td>
<td>222 (97%)</td>
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Compassion Fatigue Workshop
(Yeung & Robinson, 2015)

- Workshop on Compassion Fatigue (CF)
  - Vet Professional and Social Workers: Are they compatible?
  - Stress in the helping professions
  - What is CF?
  - Signs, symptoms, effects and impacts of CF
  - Tools for managing CF (e.g., Peer supervision, debriefing)
- Nine people attended the workshop (ranging from Vet residents, Vet Tech and Vet nurses)
- 78% agreed with “the content in the workshop was relevant to my professional development”
- Strategies/support they want to learn more: Peer Supervision & Debriefing with Colleagues

Peer Supervision Workshop
(Yeung & Verryt, 2015)

- Spinoff workshop on Peer Supervision
  - What is peer supervision?
  - How to set it up
  - Role play
- Feedback from workshop participants
  - N = 9 attended the workshop (vet residents, vet techs, Research Officers)
  - Nearly 90% of the participants strongly agreed that the workshop "increased my knowledge and skills to manage professional problems, reduce stress and to minimise the likelihood of experiencing burnt out and CF"
  - Comments:
    - "important to have the right tools to manage stress and frustration with work:
    - "Learning ways to deal with problems without gossip"
    - "Useful for steering/guiding discussion with colleagues"
The Role of Social Work in Vet Professions (Veterinary Social Work)

- Inter-disciplinary collaboration
  - Social workers: skills in stress management, communication skill training and mediation skills
  - Offer the role of human support in veterinary sciences
- Integrating One Health, Ecological Perspectives of Social Work, Anti-Oppressive and Critical Approaches to the interface between human beings, animals and the environment
- Emerging field in Aoteoara New Zealand - room to grow and improve (Exciting!)

Thank You for Listening!