



Review

Measuring compassion in nurses and other healthcare professionals: An integrative review



Irena Papadopoulos*, Sheila Ali

Middlesex University, Research Centre for Transcultural Studies in Health, UK

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Accepted 2 August 2015

Keywords:
Compassion measuring tools
Culture and compassion
Culturally competent compassion

ABSTRACT

Background: Compassion is an essential part of nursing practice. However recent high profile public inquiries have uncovered failings in the NHS and revealed a need for nursing education to assure that both undergraduate and postgraduate healthcare professionals receive training in compassion.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to review how compassion is being measured in nurses and other healthcare professionals.

Review methods: An integrative review methodology was used. The literature was searched systematically, using electronic databases, internet searches, recommendations by experts in the field, and manual searches.

Results: Six papers on measuring compassion in healthcare were included in the final analysis. Several overarching themes were identified as the main elements of compassion being measured. These included: being empathetic, recognising and ending suffering, being caring, communicating with patients, connecting to and relating with patients, being competent, attending to patients needs/going the extra mile, and involving the patient.

Conclusions: Further research is needed to develop and test tools that nurse and healthcare educators can use to assess the levels of compassion in their undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as making this available to qualified nurses in practice.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

The notion of compassion has occupied philosophers, religious and spiritual leaders for many centuries. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384BCE – 322 BCE) declared that compassion was one of the five virtues a person needed to develop in order to flourish and be happy. Compassion has a great deal in common with empathy and sympathy (Goetz et al., 2010), and these words are often used interchangeably. However, compassion is a different construct (Nussbaum, 2003; Schantz, 2007). Compassion has been defined as understanding or being aware of another person's suffering and acting to end this suffering (Schantz, 2007; Crawford et al., 2013; von Dietze and Orb, 2000). Although compassion seems to be a universal concept (Austerlic, 2009), we hypothesise that there are likely to be aspects of it that are culturally specific, and therefore definitions of compassion may vary between different cultures.

Compassion is an important part of the ethos of nursing (Bradshaw, 2011; von Dietze and Orb, 2000). Florence Nightingale (1820–1910) viewed compassion as a moral virtue and an essential trait that should be possessed by all good nurses (Bradshaw, 2011). Nightingale's view of compassion as a virtue is echoed by von Dietze and Orb (2000). Moreover, compassion is one of the main values of the constitution of the British National Health Service (NHS) and features in the Royal College of Nursing's principles of nursing practice (Department of Health (2009); Royal College of Nursing (2012)). Importantly, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)'s standards for pre-registration nursing education require that all students are assessed on whether they 'act in a manner that is attentive, kind, sensitive, compassionate and non-discriminatory, that values diversity and acts within professional boundaries' (NMC, 2010, p.100). The new NMC code of conduct for qualified nurses makes explicit their responsibility to treat people with respect, kindness and compassion. <http://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code>.

The centrality of compassion in nursing and nursing education has been highlighted in the Department of Health/NHS England (2012) strategy entitled 'Compassion in Practice: Nursing

* Corresponding author. Research Centre for Transcultural Studies in Health, Middlesex University, Hendon Campus, The Burroughs, London NW4 4BT, UK. Tel.: + 44 (0)20 8411 6626.

E-mail address: r.papadopoulos@mdx.ac.uk (I. Papadopoulos).

Midwifery and Care Staff. Our Vision and Strategy' which articulated the 6Cs: Care, Compassion, Commitment, Courage, Communication, and Competence.

There are several studies which describe how nurses themselves define compassionate care. For example, [van der Cingel \(2011\)](#) asked nurses to describe the nature of compassion in their work with older people with chronic disease. Nurses defined compassion in terms of seven dimensions: attentiveness, listening, confronting, involvement, helping, presence and understanding. A study by [Perry \(2009\)](#) found that paying attention to the little things and keeping the promise to never abandon enabled nurses to recognise and alleviate the patient's suffering and strengthen the patient–nurse relationship.

Robin Youngson, a pioneer in compassionate care, asserted that it is beyond debate that “compassionate whole-person care is critical to good patient outcomes...” ([Youngson, 2014](#), p. xxii). He provides evidence that compassionate care results in more satisfied patients, safer care, time-savings, cost-savings and happier and more resilient health professionals ([Youngson, 2012](#)). Despite all the benefits associated with compassionate care, recent public inquiries in the UK, such as the Francis inquiry into the Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, have brought to light poor standards of care which were linked to a lack of compassion ([Abraham, 2011](#); [Francis, 2013](#)). Following these inquiries there have been several recommendations for improving standards of care. Suggestions have included providing better training and supervision for staff, improving communication, providing clear guidelines and procedures, and asking patients about their experience of care ([Department of Health \(2013a\)](#); [Francis, 2013](#); [Keogh, 2013](#)). It has also been suggested that candidates for pre-registration nursing degrees should be assessed on compassion and other values before being accepted ([Francis, 2013](#); [Health Education England, 2013](#)).

The UK Department of Health called for a scientific measure of compassion to be developed as a high priority for the profession ([Sturgeon, 2010](#)). It has been reported that if levels of compassion are to be increased through a variety of interventions, current levels must be measured even though this will be challenging ([Mooney, 2009](#)). At present there are no standardised measures of compassion that are routinely used in the NHS. However, the Department of Health suggests that the Friends and Family test supports the 6Cs of nursing and will help to maintain a culture of compassionate care ([Department of Health \(2013b\)](#)). This test is a general measure of patient experience, and does not assess compassion directly. Nevertheless, a patient who is treated compassionately may be more likely to perceive their care as more positive, and to recommend the service to their friends and family.

The original aim of this study was to review the current literature on measuring culturally competent compassion which has been defined as a human quality of understanding the suffering of others and wanting to do something about it using culturally appropriate and acceptable nursing interventions. This takes into consideration both the patients' and the carers' cultural backgrounds as well as the context in which care is given ([Papadopoulos, 2011](#)). The motivation for connecting compassion to cultural competence is the increasingly multicultural context of care provision, as well as the explicit statements from the NMC's standards for pre-registration nursing education and code of practice, for care to be compassionate, non-discriminatory and to value diversity. Sadly, the literature searches failed to yield any articles which addressed culturally competent compassion. Therefore the aim of the study was revised to be a review on how compassion is being measured in nurses and other healthcare professionals.

Methods

An integrative review approach was employed. This is defined as a “specific review method which summarises empirical or theoretical literature to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a healthcare problem” ([Broome \(1993\)](#), cited by [Whittlemore and Knafel, 2005](#), p.546). This involved conducting a systematic search of the literature using electronic databases including CINAHL, PsycINFO, EBSCO (Allied and Complementary Medicine database, eBook Collection, Education research complete, EBSCO e-journals), PubMed, Social care online, Ovid, PsycARTICLES, and the Ovid nursing database. A full list of the search terms can be found in [Box A](#). Additional articles were sourced from internet searches, recommendations by experts in the field, and manual searches.

Inclusion criteria

This study included only research articles that were:

- written in English,
- written in the last 30 years,
- peer-reviewed,
- dealing with measuring compassion in the healthcare professions (primarily nurses), not compassion in general.

Data analysis

Sourced articles were abstract screened by two different reviewers, and any discrepancies were discussed and a consensus was reached. After abstract screening, the remaining articles were full text screened to assess whether they met the inclusion criteria and addressed the research question. Data were then extracted from the remaining articles, and extracted data were grouped into themes. Quality assessment was carried out for all studies using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme checklist for cohort studies ([Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2013](#)).

Box A

Search terms used in this review.

Culture and compassion
Measuring compassion
Compassion and measuring tools and nursing
Compassion and nursing
Compassion and mental health nursing
Practising compassion
Hospital and compassion
Clinical environments
Learning compassion
Learning to be compassionate
Values underpinning compassion
Values associated with compassion
Philosophical underpinnings of compassion
Theories of compassion
Compassion theories
Cultural competence, culture and compassion
Multicultural
Compassion and health professional education
Teaching
Training

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/366815>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/366815>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)