Fatigue in all its Flavors

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Outline

- Moral Distress
- Decision Fatigue
- Compassion Fatigue
- Combating Caretaker Fatigue
Moral Distress - Definitions

**Ethical Dilemma** – A situation in which there is conflict between one or more of the following: one’s moral values, obligations to the patient, other animals, one’s workplace and colleagues, or society at large (public health & safety).

**Moral Conflict** – “Occurs when a professional is aware of their own morally correct path but is unable to follow it satisfactorily due to internal or external constraints” *

**Moral Distress** – A psychological state of anguish that occurs when an individual is unable to resolve a moral conflict and experiences “a violation of one’s professional integrity and obligations” *

**Moral Competency** – “The ability to understand morally conflicting situations and use good judgement, intention, and behavior when responding to these” *

**Moral Integrity** – “Adherence to moral values affecting the sense of dignity and self-respect” *

*Arbe et al, 2019*
Ethical Dilemmas & Conflicting Duties

The most common decision-making method used when encountering ethical dilemmas was “gut instinct based on their personal value system”.
~ Kipperman, Morris, & Rollin, 2018

The Impact of Moral Distress

Modifying Factors
- Personality & Intuition
- Personal Morality
- Experience
- Colleagues’ Advice
- Formal Training
- Occupational Stressors

Consequences
- Impotence, Failure
- Isolation, Shame
- Avoidance
- Anger, Frustration
- Blunted moral sensitivity
- STRESS

Mental Health
- Anxiety
- Burnout
- Compassion Fatigue
- Compromised sense of moral integrity
- Reduced Wellbeing
- Low Job Satisfaction
Decision Fatigue - Definitions

- **Important Note** – There is a generalized lack of conceptual clarity for decision fatigue. What we have is largely derived from human healthcare.

- **Decision Fatigue** – “describes the impaired ability to make decisions and control behavior as a consequence of repeated acts of decision making”*  

- **Ego Depletion** – conceptualized as a depleted state of two key internal resources (executive function & emotional regulation)

- **Executive function** – “describes a set of cognitive processes and mental skills that help an individual plan, monitor, and successfully execute their goals.”**
  - Attentional control, working memory, inhibition, and problem-solving

- **Emotional regulation** – “the ability to exert control over one’s own emotional state”***

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*Pignatiello, Martin, & Hickman, 2020  
**Psychology Today  
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### Decision Fatigue Precursors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decisional</th>
<th>Self-Regulatory</th>
<th>Situational</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Being subjected to a sequence of decisions can be a predisposing factor for decision fatigue</td>
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<td>• Degree of decision fatigue increases with decision complexity or difficulty</td>
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<td>• Acts of self-regulation can be predictive of decision fatigue</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Time of day</td>
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<td>• Blood glucose</td>
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<td>• Physiologic fatigue</td>
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### Attributes of Decision Fatigue

#### Behavioral Attributes (most common)
- Avoidant behaviors and Procrastination tendencies
- Passive approach to decision-making & Less persistence
- Impulsive behavior in decision-making
- Frustration and Irritation experienced more intensely

#### Cognitive Attributes
- Inhibits reasoning ability (mental shortcuts)
- Worse performance when quantitative skills required
- Cognitive task performance prolonged

#### Physiological Attributes
- Deterioration of physical endurance
Decision Fatigue

Mental Health Consequences

- Impaired executive functions
- Lower decision-making self-efficacy
  - Decreased ability to engage with goal identification and/or monitoring
- Failure to recognize decisional opportunities
- Susceptibility to decision-making bias
  - Psychological myopia
- Greater decisional conflict
  - Increased sense of uncertainty
- Higher rate of decision regret

Compassion Fatigue
Compassion Fatigue - Definition

"The term compassion fatigue feels like a phrase in search of a meaning. ... To this day, definitions overlap and wander away from each other like puppies from the nest." – Susan P. Cohen

Compassion Fatigue - "Physical and spiritual exhaustion, accompanied by acute emotional pain, that stems from a caregiving position." *

Secondary Traumatic Stress – “A component of compassion fatigue that involves work-related, secondary exposure to extremely stressful events.” *

Compassion fatigue, caregiver stress, secondary traumatization, vicarious traumatization, compassion stress, caregiver fatigue, bystander effect, trauma exposure response**

Contributing Factors
• Lack of assertiveness
• People-pleasing
• Poor boundaries
• Perfectionism
• Self-criticism
• Work-related stress
• Exhaustion/Burnout
• Moral Distress

Professional Consequences
• Poor job performance
• Trouble making decisions
• Decreased empathy
• Interpersonal conflict
• Poor work-life balance
• Over-functioning
• Disengagement

Mental Health Impact
• Irritability, anxiety
• Sadness, apathy
• Detachment, guilt
• Negative self-image
• Headaches/GI distress
• Sleep disturbances
• Substance abuse
• Exhaustion

* Ayl, 2013
**Teater & Ludgate, 2014
Combatting Fatigue

**WORK STRESSORS**
- Manage boundaries related to scheduling and agency
- Promote culture of support, wellness, and collaboration
- Emphasize stakeholder education
- Identify situational triggers

**SELF-CARE**
- Mindfulness
- Self-Compassion and positive self-talk
- Common Humanity: You are NOT alone!
- Emotional regulation & distress tolerance
- Perfectionism & the Imposter Phenomenon
- Recruit a wellness team: Mentor, Work Peers, Mental Health Professional, Life Buddies
- Foundational self-care: eat, sleep, move, breathe, love, touch, laugh
- Education in mental health & Wellbeing

**DECISION FATIGUE**
- Employ protocols & checklists where appropriate
- Build in checks & balances
- Schedule decision making
- Manage physiological factors
- Manage Modifying Factors

**SLEEP**
- Employ sleep hygiene techniques to improve sleep quality
- Aim for a minimum of 7 hours of sleep per night

**MORAL DISTRESS**
- Clear values and boundaries
- Improve communication skills
- Training in conflict resolution
- Training in ethical reasoning
- Manage Modifying Factors

**Questions?**

- **Lifebeat by NOMV**
  - 10% HAPPIER: MEDITATION FOR FIDUCY SKEPTICS
- **NOMV's List**
- **ATLAS OF THE HEART**
- **BRENÉ BROWN**
- **10% HAPPIER**
- **HEAdSPACE**
- **TREAT YOUR HEAD RIGHT**
- **VETERINARY MENTAL HEALTH**
  - Taylor Miller
    - DVM & Professional Counselor Associate
- **NOT ONE MORE VET**