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Promoting a Healthy Work Environment in the Emergency Department

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Background

Stress is an undesirable reality continuously present in the busy lives we live today. Nurses bear the burden of meeting patient demands as well as the expectations of the organization. Being a nurse in the emergency department provides additional challenges because of its fast paced nature and high acuity settings¹. Finding a creative solution to reducing the stress in the emergency department staff is important in promoting a healthy work environment.

Purpose

The goal of this research study was to determine if the diffusion of a blend of citrus essential oils in the emergency department would have an effect on the staff perception of workplace stress, compassion fatigue, burnout and staff call-outs.

Method

All staff members of the department were invited to participate. The design was a quasi-experimental study using pre, 2-week post, and 4-week post cross-sectional survey data collection. Essential oil diffusers were strategically placed throughout the department counter tops and were diffused over a two week period.

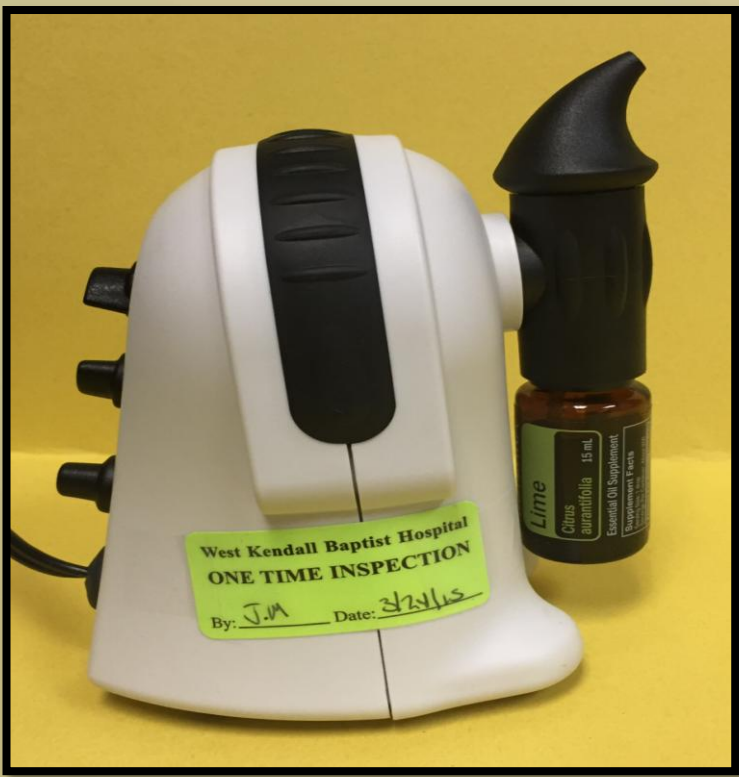


Table 1: RN survey outcomes

Outcome		Mean (SD)	Test	Sig
Compassion satisfaction	Baseline	40.5 (6.1)	$F_{(2,63)} = 1.55$	$p = 0.220$
	2 weeks	42.7 (6.6)		
	4 weeks	38.2 (8.7)		
Burn-out	Baseline	20.9 (5.3)	$F_{(2,63)} = 0.93$	$p = 0.402$
	2 weeks	18.9 (6.0)		
	4 weeks	21.5 (6.1)		
Secondary traumatic stress	Baseline	20.3 (4.9)	$F_{(2,59)} = 1.64$	$p = 0.202$
	2 weeks	19.2 (5.3)		
	4 weeks	17.4 (4.1)		
Workplace Stress Scale	Baseline	17.4 (4.7)	$F_{(2,61)} = 2.47$	$p = 0.093$
	2 weeks	15.6 (4.3)		
	4 weeks	20.5 (9.2)		

Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

Compassion Satisfaction and Compassion Fatigue (ProQOL) Version 5 (2009)

When you [help] people you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you [help] can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a [helper]. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the last 30 days.

1=Never	2=Rarely	3=Sometimes	4=Often	5=Very Often
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
16.	17.	18.	19.	20.
21.	22.	23.	24.	25.
26.	27.	28.	29.	30.

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The Workplace Stress Scale™

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Thinking about your current job, how often does each of the following statements describe how you feel?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
A. Conditions at work are unpleasant or sometimes even unsafe.	1	2	3	4	5
B. I feel that my job is negatively affecting my physical or emotional well being.	1	2	3	4	5
C. I have too much work to do and/or too many unreasonable deadlines.	1	2	3	4	5
D. I find it difficult to express my opinions or feelings about my job conditions to my superiors.	1	2	3	4	5
E. I feel that job pressures interfere with my family or personal life.	1	2	3	4	5
F. I have adequate control or input over my work duties.	5	4	3	2	1
G. I receive appropriate recognition or rewards for good performance.	5	4	3	2	1
H. I am able to utilize my skills and talents to the fullest extent at work.	5	4	3	2	1

Aromatherapy ED Study Demographic Questionnaire

Did you work at least 6 days in the last 2 weeks?

What is your age?

What is your sex?

What is your race?

What is your ethnicity?

What is your healthcare professional role?

How many years have you been a healthcare professional?

Findings

There were 38 participants at baseline, 15 at the 2-week follow-up and 13 at the 4-week follow-up. When comparing the baseline and follow-up, there was no statistically significant differences in compassion satisfaction or workplace stress (Table 1). There was no significant difference in the rate of staff call-outs before (2.9%) and after (3.0%) the implementation ($\chi^2_{1df} = 0.134$, $p = 0.714$). There was a significant negative correlation between compassion satisfaction and the level of workplace stress ($r = -0.617$, $p < 0.001$) and a significant positive correlation in the burn-out scores and the level of workplace stress ($r = 0.705$, $p < 0.001$).

Discussion

The feedback from staff varied. However, since the completion of the study, staff members have sought out vials for individual use during working hours. This suggests future opportunities such as a stress relieving cabinet where staff can freely go to use an essential oil to promote health and wellbeing while at work.

Implications for Practice

For future research, consideration of diffusing other essential oils or using a different application method may create a favorable outcome. For replication of a similar study using diffusers, a benefit may be to have the diffusers mounted on the walls out of direct visibility. Involving the staff in the development of a creative stress relieving solution may also influence the results of promoting a healthy work environment.

References:

1. Cooke, M., Holzhauser, K., Jones, M., Davis, C., & Finucane, J. (2007). The effect of aromatherapy massage with music on stress and anxiety levels of emergency nurses: Comparison between summer and winter. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 1695-1702. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2702.2006.01709.x



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