COMPASSION: WHAT IS IT?

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Compassion could be viewed as a universal phenomenon in which every human being is going to require it. It is an improvement in the well-being of an individual where they learn to adapt to themselves and others (Pauley & Mcpherson, 2010). This paper aims to discuss the meaning of compassion and to clarify the meaning including its uses. According to Schantz (2007), the concept of compassion is neither clearly defined in nursing nor broadly promoted in the context of everyday nursing practice. Hence, nurse leaders argued that compassion is not a new concept. Nurse leaders in olden times identified compassion as the characteristic of a good nurse and the essence of caring as a quality of a nurse who has motivation and dedication in caring for the sick to alleviate suffering (Wiklund & Rn, 2017). Furthermore, it continues to be the highest indicator of a good quality of a nurse (Johnson et al., 2015). In addition, compassion has also been identified as a human experience that brings profound significance to nursing (McConnell, 2015).

The meaning and definition of compassion
According to the Colour Oxford English dictionary (2006, p,131), compassion means sympathetic pity and concern for the suffering of other people. The adjective used is compassionate. Also, emotion researchers define compassion as the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering (Greater Good Magazine, 2020). Furthermore, compassion means "making time to listen, to talk, to hold a hand and imagine what the patient is feeling" (Johnson et al., 2015). Multiple definitions have been identified in the literature with similar concepts. Compassion is defined as a deep feeling of connectedness, with the experience of human suffering that requires personal knowledge of the suffering of others, arouses a moral response to the recognized suffering and results in caring which brings an end to the sufferer (Zamanzadeh & Valizadeh, 2018). One study revealed that 21% of respondents were describing compassion as understanding, 38% care or caring, 17% empathy and 16% listening (Johnson et al., 2015). In addition, more than 10 statements identified compassion as treating others as you wish to be treated by others. The scholar and philosopher Emmanuel Levina defines compassion in philosophical terms as irreducible excess of affectivity for the ultimately meaningless suffering of another beyond all theodicy and causality, whom one is ethically commanded to offer help as he or she is a higher and unique other, prior to any comparison and judgement (Diamantides, 2017). Moreover, from an Islamic point of view, compassion means sensitivity to others suffering. The Nobel Quran teaches to be

compassionate specially to orphans, the widow, the poor and the slaves (Engineer 2018). This revelation comes from fourteen centuries back. It could be argued that the concept existed a long time ago. In contrast, Schantz, (2007) in her concept analysis of compassion concludes that compassion is hardly found in contemporary nursing literature but rather caring, empathy and sympathy are interchangeably used in nursing scholarships. Sympathy means understanding what others are feeling, without feeling it oneself. Compassion means feelings have prompted to take actions to relieve the suffering of another person.

Uses of the concept "compassion"

In the following section, the writer will discuss the uses of the concept of compassion in various contexts. Firstly, as a caring concept. In this aspect, the related words used are compassion, compassionate, compassionate care. The concept compassion has been used as a core concept as caring science (Wiklund & Rn, 2017) Hence, the act of caring is seen as an indication of an expected consequence of compassion (Bandes, 2017). In most of the definitions of compassion from the literature emphasis is given related to suffering. A systematic review concluded that compassion means the sensitivity shown to understand another person's suffering, combined with the willingness to help promote the wellbeing of the person (Perez-Bret et al, 2016). Furthermore, the National Health Services (NHS) Commission Board (2012) for England defines compassion as to how care is given through relationships based on empathy, respect and dignity. It can also be described as intelligent kindness and is

central to how people perceive their care *(Papadopoulos et al., 2016)*. With the compassionate care concept in nursing, the nurse seeks to recognize, accurately detect and connect with the inner condition of the spirit of another through presence, and centered in the caring moment physically, mentally and spiritually (Watson, 2010: Cited in Tomey et al, 2010). Furthermore, in psychotherapy compassion is seen as attaching with clients' suffering and supporting change through actions (Vivino et al., 2008). Moreover, Schantz, (2007) argued that neither compassion and empathy be used interchangeably nor compassion and care is a similar concept.

Secondly, compassion in the nursing care context. Compassionate care is particularly important for patients with debilitating and terminal illnesses as emotional disability is involved in accepting the prognosis of these conditions —(Bessen et al., 2019). When nurses provide compassionate care to patients to alleviate their suffering and it promotes better health outcomes (Dempsey et al 2014). Although it might not be possible to eradicate inherent suffering, nursing and health care staff can promote confidence and considerable care to suffering. Nurses use compassionate care as a powerful emotion and have both positive concerns for the patient and the nurse (Zamanzadeh & Valizadeh, 2018). In addition, providing comfort to patients results in a better outcome for patients. In order to provide compassion, effective communication skills, and are essential. These are essential elements in delivering compassion to patients and family

members especially when dealing with sensitive issues and in critical conditions. Studies have identified the importance of communication skills in delivering compassionate care (Kneafsey & Andrews, 2018). According to Katz (2019), verbal and non-verbal communication express compassion and comfort the patient's path from diagnosis, recovery, treatment, and survival at the end of life. Nurses worldwide play an important role not only in providing care but ensuring public safety through education and preparedness for all types of crises by helping save lives and preventing adverse outcomes. These are the qualities that nurses display in their profession(Kerfoot, 2019).

Finally, when exploring the concept of compassion and its uses in religious perspectives: most religions stress the importance of compassion. Compassion, is mentioned in the Nobel Quran, the Holy book of Muslims. A Muslim begins every action by reciting, "beginning in the name of Allah, who is compassionate and merciful" (translation). Hence Muslims are supposed to call upon Allah the compassionate and merciful at every step. The Quran stresses 4 main aspects repeatedly: Rahmah, Ihsan, Adl and Hikma (compassion, benevolence, justice and wisdom) Rahmah (compassion, mercy) and its roots prosper in the Holy Quran (Engineer, 2018). Similarly, compassion in Buddhism means proactively taking action to remove the suffering of others through the practice of compassionate qualities (Gelek & David, 2013).

Conclusion

Compassion is an essential ingredient of nursing care which is expected by its recipients and its recognition is worldwide. This concept compassion is defined similarly in a different context in the literature. This paper looked into the various definitions of compassion and its different uses. For compassion to take place there has to be suffering and when delivering compassionate care physical, psychological needs and understanding are key factors. Compassionate care is particularly important in patients with debilitating diseases and with poor prognoses.

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