

STS

SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS



Acute onset of emotional distress experienced when an individual is exposed to details of the firsthand traumatic experiences of another, mirroring PTSD symptoms.

Symptoms

Avoidance behaviors, emotional lability, sleep disturbances, decreased empathy, and impaired work performance.

Context

Often triggered by indirect trauma, such as through patient interactions in emergency care, mental health services, child welfare, and oncology.

Management Strategy

Developing STS-specific policies, providing trauma-informed training, enhancing communication, and supporting through preventive psychoeducation and supervision.

VT

VICARIOUS TRAUMA



A profound alteration in one's emotional and psychological outlook caused by sustained engagement with others' traumatic experiences.

Symptoms

Changes in worldview, beliefs about self and others, anxiety, withdrawal, isolation, and compromised care.

Context

Affects professionals repeatedly exposed to patients' traumatic experiences, commonly in emergency, oncology, and palliative care settings

Management Strategy

Tailored education, supportive environments, systematic support, developed policies, cultures that value psychological resources, preventative approaches, and compassion satisfaction programs.

CF

COMPASSION FATIGUE



A temporary, deep exhaustion characterized by significantly reduced empathy, resulting from prolonged, intense caregiving activities.

Symptoms

Avoidance of care duties, emotional numbness, interpersonal strain, and chronic fatigue or exhaustion.

Context

Occurs from continuous exposure to patient trauma, complex care needs, intimate patient connections, and high mortality environments.

Management Strategy

Education and training, clinical supervision and debriefs, promoting restorative breaks and well-being practices, creating a positive work environment, and offering leadership and managerial support and feedback.

M

MORAL & ETHICAL MISALIGNMENT



Moral stress, distress, or injury arising when individuals witness, perpetrate, or fail to prevent actions that conflict with their ethical or moral beliefs.

Symptoms

Feelings of guilt, shame, anxiety, depression, feelings of betrayal, erosion of moral identity and trust in team.

Context

Spans individual, team, and organizational levels, where differing ethical expectations and professional duties intersect and conflict.

Management Strategy

Fostering value-based cultures, enhancing ethical awareness, education and dialogue focus, supporting quality practice environments, and promoting ethical organizational practice.