

From:
To: [Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices](#)
Subject: Question from public hearing
Date: Saturday, 27 January 2018 11:17:17 PM

Dear Dr Purdy,

Please find my answer to the question below that was not answered during the hearing, due to time constraints:

The inquiry has received many submissions expressing deep admiration and gratitude for the assistance of palliative care health professionals. Providing health services is no doubt often a demanding and difficult, but also rewarding, profession; however would it be true that working in palliative care takes a particular toll, even in comparison to work in other areas of health?

Answer - In my opinion, working in palliative care is both rewarding and challenging. There is growing research around the psychological impact of working within different specialist areas. A basic review of this literature suggests that those working in palliative care face similar levels of psychological distress and burnout than those in other areas (1-4). However a study from the United States (5) found that palliative care clinicians had a higher level of burnout (62%) than medical oncologists (45%). Whether this reflects an Australian change in workforce stress would need to be specifically assessed. Personal and workplace factors impact on both risk for burnout as well as protection from burnout (1-5) and further research is required to ensure that the needs of the palliative care workforce are being met, as well as the needs of the healthcare workforce in general.

Ref:

1. Peters L, Cant R, Sellick K, O'Connor M, Lee S, Burney S, et al. [Is work stress in palliative care nurses a cause for concern? A literature review](#). Int J Palliat Nurs. 2012 Nov;18(11):561-7.
2. Koh MY, Chong PH, Neo PS, Ong YJ, Yong WC, Ong WY, et al. [Burnout, psychological morbidity and use of coping mechanisms among palliative care practitioners: A multi-centre cross-sectional study](#). Palliat Med. 2015 Jul;29(7):633-42. Epub 2015 Mar 31.
3. Dunwoodie DA, Auret K. [Psychological morbidity and burnout in palliative care doctors in Western Australia](#). Intern Med J. 2007 Oct;37(10):693-8. Epub 2007 May 21.
4. Pereira SM, Fonseca AM, Carvalho AS. [Burnout in palliative care: a systematic review](#). Nurs Ethics. 2011 May;18(3):317-26.
5. Kamal AH, Bull JH, Wolf SP, Swetz KM, Shanafelt TD, Ast K, et al. [Prevalence and predictors of burnout among hospice and palliative care clinicians in the U.S.](#) J Pain and Symptom Manage. 2016 Apr; 51(4): 690-6. Epub 2015 Nov 24

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Keiron Bradley

Palliative Care Clinical Lead

WA Cancer and Palliative Care Network

Department of Health