"We’re losing people to McDonalds!"

Protecting the Worker’s Wellbeing: Secondary Trauma to Workers Providing Help to Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Survivors

**Literature Review**
- What can happen to a worker at a DVSA agency after listening to and being in close contact with trauma survivors
  - Vicarious Trauma
  - Secondary Trauma
  - Burn Out
  - Compassion Fatigue
- Difference between vicarious trauma and secondary trauma
  - Vicarious – Cognitive schemas
  - Secondary – same symptoms that trauma survivor experiences (ex. PTSD)
- Burn out
  - Physical/mental exhaustion
- Compassion fatigue
  - Overuse of empathy causing exhaustion (combination of secondary trauma/burnout)
- Three techniques that can help prevent the four consequences
  - Not an overload of cases/control of schedule
  - Social Support
  - Self-Care

**Methods**
- Interviewers completed a four hour training
- 11 of the 34 domestic violence sexual assault agencies in Oklahoma participated in the study
- Semi-structured qualitative interview
- Interviews lasted around an hour
- Interviewed the Executive Directors and Supervisors of the agency
- Transcribed each interview to identify main themes

**Themes**
- The good: "We don’t have a lot of college volunteers which is a blessing and at the same time a curse because it creates a lot of burn over and rotation."
  - "Just because you know volunteers can get burn out, they’re not being paid."
  - "I know that there was this amazing burn out retreat that the agency just did every year but they ended up cancelling it last year, which makes me sad. It was for domestic violence and sexual assault workers and they would go in kind of a camp site some place in Oklahoma."
  - "We did the burn out retreat every year for quite a long time, the last two years we’ve not been able to do it anymore. You know money and stuff like that. But in what essentially came out of that was the idea that I had that I wanted to have a place where people would come and actually process."

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**Discussion**
- The Burnout Retreat played an important role
- Difficult keep volunteers because of the training
- Hard to fill paid positions because they want to have the right people
- More training to see how these symptoms affect the employees personally
- There is a complete lack of financial support for this population
- The environment created by the executive directors and supervisors plays a large role in how safe the employees feel
- Boundaries and self-care also showed how affective an employee can be to a client

**Limitations**
- Small sample size
- Speaking to executive directors and supervisors instead of the employees that work with the clients directly
- Since it was a qualitative study we were not able to measure what symptoms were felt the most and why