Exploration of Factors Contributing to Compassion Fatigue in Family Caregivers Providing Care to Older-Adult Relatives
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Introduction
This qualitative research study explored factors contributing to compassion fatigue in family caregivers who assisted paid staff helping to provide care to older adult relatives residing in long-term care facilities.

Compassion fatigue – “debilitating weariness brought about by repetitive empathetic responses to the pain and suffering of others” (La Rowe, 2005).

Participants and Method
• Participants - Eight family members
• Data collection - Observation and conversations
• Data analysis - Narrative analysis and poetic interpretation
• Conceptual Frame – Stress process model for family caregiving

Themes
1. Relentless vigilance - almost continuous state of watchfulness
“I can’t let up. I can’t turn my back for a minute and I get disappointed.”

2. Consistent inconsistency - lack of consistency in care provided by paid staff
“One thing I can count on is that things are always done in different ways by different nurses”

3. Role confusion - caregiving had an impact on family members’ natural relationship roles with their relatives. Their role as caregiver caused their role as spouse, parent or child to diminish.
“Sometimes I feel more like a nurse than a wife. I wish I could just sit and hold his hand sometimes”

Recommendations
• Watch for CF - family caregivers may be predisposed to CF
• Assess family members’ desired level of care involvement
• Determine reasons for their caregiving
• Provide quality care to reduce secondary stressors

References