

Exploring Moral Distress in Air Medical Clinicians

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Introduction

- Moral distress is associated with burnout and intent to leave among healthcare professionals
- Air medical clinicians encounter a variety of unique ethical challenges
- Moral distress is underexplored within the air medical literature



Purpose

- Explore how air medical clinicians experience, cope with, and address moral distress

Methods

- Qualitative descriptive
- Convenience & snowball sampling
- 3 Semi-structured interviews
- Member-checking & audit trails
- Open coding & constant comparison
- Inductive thematic analysis
- Data collection began July 2025
- Ongoing research

References

1. Wilson, Melissa A., et al. "Moral Distress in the Critical Care Air Transport Nurse." *Nursing Outlook*, vol. 68, no. 1, Jan. 2020, pp. 33–44, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2019.07.003>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2020.
2. Images created using ChatGPT

Results

Preliminary Themes:

1. "Forgetting their Faces"
2. "Stigma" and "Taboo"
3. Importance of Formal and Informal Support Systems and Resources
4. Personal Growth and Spirituality



Conclusions

- The Air Medical field has unique ethical and moral challenges
- Air medical clinicians do experience moral distress
- Air medical clinicians cope with moral distress through formal and informal support systems
- Moral distress and other forms of psychological distress may still be considered taboo
- Hospitals and air medical companies should consider targeted strategies to address moral distress

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