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5-2022

### **Addressing Moral Distress: A Call To Action For Nursing**

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# Addressing Moral Distress: A Call to Action for Nursing

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## Children's Mercy Kansas City

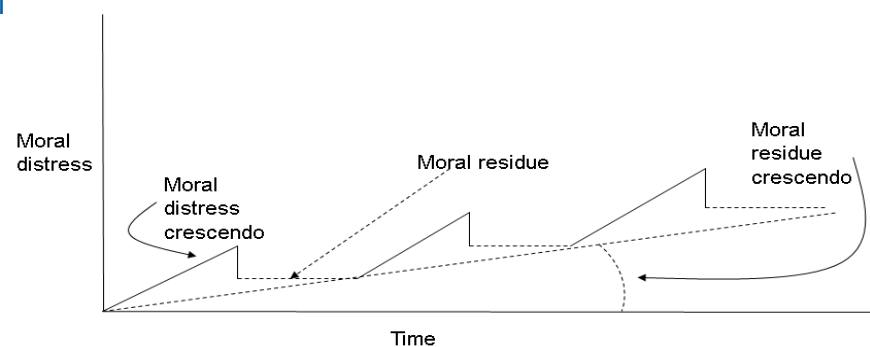
### Background

**Moral distress** occurs when a person's moral integrity is seriously compromised, either because one feels unable to act in accordance with core values and obligations or attempted actions fail to achieve the desired outcome. (Hamric 2015)

**Aim:** To identify root causes of moral distress for APRNs and their collaborating physicians so intervention strategies for mitigation can be initiated.

**Problem:** The experience of not being able to act in accordance with one's core values

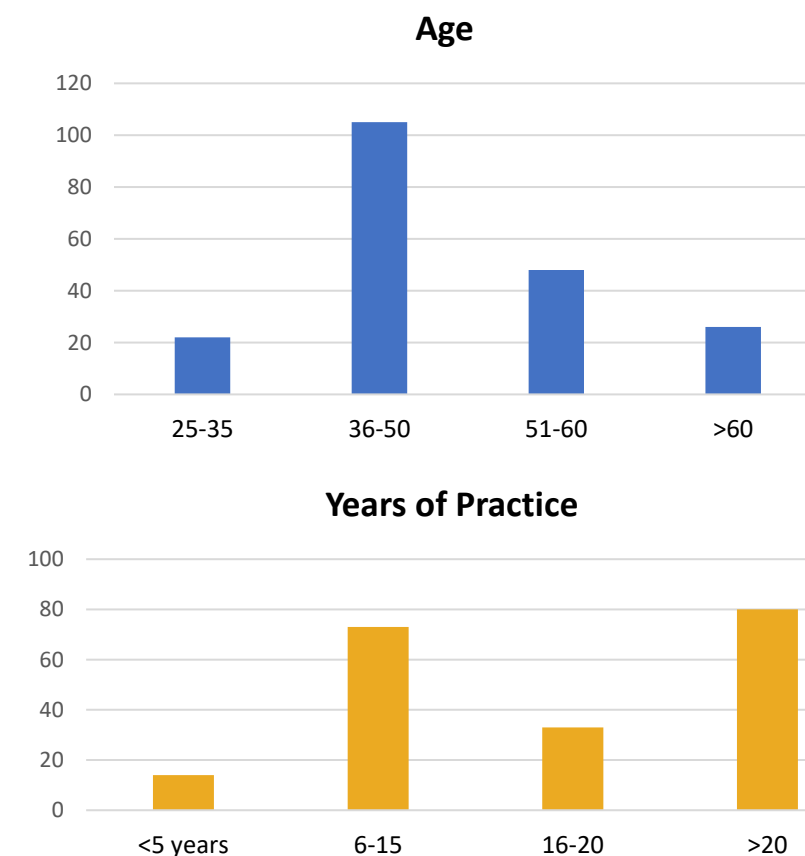
- Crescendo effect – rising moral distress with each incident
- Linked to job satisfaction, physical and mental well-being



### Methods

**Measure of Moral Distress for Healthcare Professionals (MMD-HP)** survey (Epstein, et al.) administered via REDCap to APRNs and their collaborating physicians in July 2020 with 202 responses.

**Physicians=43% (86) APRNs=57% (116);  
Males=25% Females=75%**



### Results

**Gender** was strongest correlate of both frequency score and level of distress score:

- **Frequency:** females < males
- **Distress:** females > males

Highest Frequency	Highest Distress	Lowest Distress
Emergency Medicine	CV Surgery	Rehab
Neonatal/ICH/Maternal fetal medicine	Neurology	Urgent Care
General Peds	Other surgery (neurosurgery, plastics, urology)	Ortho

**Implications for nursing:** Continue to provide safe moral spaces for ethical discussion, increase awareness of organizational resources to mitigate moral distress and leadership recognition of the impact on nursing and healthcare workforce.

*"We might become even more distressed as we realize that solving the ethical problems of health care now urgently includes global, social and environmental advocacy." (Jameton, 2017)*

## So... what can we do?

### Mitigation strategies:

- Give permission for self-care
- Provide safe, moral spaces for ethical discussion
- Team discussions and activities
- Connect with ethics resources
- Contact the Center for Professional Well-Being

