

A Qualitative Descriptive Exploration of the Experiences of Therapists Who Work With Burn Survivors

Miranda Yelvington, PhD, OTR/L, BCPR, BT-C¹, Stacey Reynolds, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA², Rachel Wood, RN, PhD, NPD-BC, CEN, CPEN³

¹Arkansas Children's Hospital, Little Rock, AR, USA; ²Virginia Commonwealth University, Gainesville, FL, USA;

³Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, United States

DOI: [10.5014/ajot.2024.78S2-PO237](https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2024.78S2-PO237)

Date presented: March 23, 24

Primary Author and Speaker: Miranda Yelvington, yelvingtonmi@archildrens.org

PURPOSE: Exposure to patients who have experienced major traumatic events places therapists at risk for developing high levels of anxiety and stress, directly impacting their quality of life and can subsequently influence patient safety and satisfaction, job retention, and productivity. These concepts have been explored in other disciplines but have not been fully explored in the therapists who provide direct care to burn survivors. The purpose of this study was to understand and describe the experiences of occupational and physical therapists who provide acute therapy to burn survivors.

DESIGN: A qualitative descriptive study design was used to explore the experiences of these therapists.

METHOD: Semi-structured interviews were completed with 10 participants and conventional content analysis was used to analyze the data collected from semi-structured interviews.

RESULTS: Six themes emerged: 1) the importance of therapeutic relationships to patient successes and therapists' retention; 2) the autonomy and flexibility of therapists; 3) the impact of career longevity on compassion; 4) the uniqueness of burn team relationships and camaraderie; 5) the challenges of operating within a healthcare system; and 6) the physical, mental and emotional challenges to the therapists' resiliency. Participants spoke about the positive and negative impact of being part of a multidisciplinary team and often feeling limited by the challenges inherent in operating within a healthcare system.

CONCLUSION: This research brings to light the physical, mental, and emotional challenges that impact therapists' resiliency.

IMPACT STATEMENT: Professional satisfaction directly impacts patient safety and outcomes. With the current high levels of staff turnover, the experiences of therapists should be considered when creating programs to increase retention and professional quality of life.

References

- Bayuo, J., & Agbenorku, P. (2021). Compassion fatigue in the burn unit: A review of quantitative evidence. *Journal of Burn Care & Research*, 43(4), 957–964. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jbcr/irab237>
- Murji, A., Gomez, M., Knighton, J., & Fish, J. S. (2006). Emotional implications of working in a burn unit. *Journal of Burn Care & Research*, 27(1), 8–13. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.bcr.0000195093.36328.ab>
- Markiewitz, N., Cox, C., Krout, K., McColl, M., & Caffrey, J. A. (2018). Examining the rates of anxiety, depression, and burnout among providers at a regional burn center. *Journal of Burn Care & Research*, 40(1), 39–43. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jbcr/iry042>