

Who cares for the caregiver? Persons who are responsible for caring about others often find themselves at risk for stress and burnout which can result in physical, emotional and mental distress, absenteeism, self-medication and addiction, poor performance and medical errors, reduced access to effective care, turnover, and even mortality for clinicians and their patients.

The Health Cares Exchange Initiative, Inc. (HCEI) was founded at Boston in 1992 in response to the stressors that clinicians face daily. After developing its own moderator's guide, HCEI held the first-ever nationwide focus groups with paid and nonpaid care providers to identify their experiences and needs. As a result HCEI developed its self-compassion skills building seminar "Celebrating Ourselves: Beating Stress" which has been presented for a variety of audiences. In 2004 HCEI became the first organization to foster international collaborations when it began working with groups of care providers in England, Wales and Scotland.

Currently, our hearts, and then preventable medical errors which occur in hospitals and other medical facilities, account for the first and third most common causes of death in the US. As the life expectancy of the US workforce also continues to decline and suicide rates elevate, most clinicians hide stress from each other with often negative outcomes. But since 1992 HCEI has been moderating discussions about ways to identify stress and respond in healthy ways; we can either talk about it or we can ignore it.

Using classroom style interactive exercises, HCEI moderates engaging and empowering seminars to remind participants about dynamics of altruism, the stress response, symptoms of burnout, and practical techniques to address stress and our personal and professional lives. Through writing exercises, pairs discussions, charting and listing data participants renew their awareness of stress and renew their commitment to care and advocate for others but foremost about themselves.

For more information and to explore collaboration please visit HCEI.org or ring 773-509-6402.