

Compassion in Science, the Dare to Care Journey

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Compassion Fatigue, CF, is a combination of physical, emotional and psychological depletion associated with working and caring for animals and their well-being in a research environment.



What does CF look like? It can be a range of symptoms that can include depression, anxiety, and physical ailments, to isolation, absenteeism, hopelessness, substance abuse, and even suicide. Compassion fatigue can be considered a normal consequence of caring. The goal of Dare to Care, is to assist all members of the research team in understanding and managing the emotional challenges that result from the care and use of laboratory animals.

What have we accomplished?

- Initial needs assessment was conducted by Anneke Kaiser from Cope+.
- Discovered what the core caregivers need to help them cope with their duties in caring with the animals.
- Major concern for direct caregivers was not knowing when an animal or cohort of animals were going to be euthanized. We designed and ordered stickers that can be placed on cages to designate upcoming endpoints. For primates email notifications have been used.
- People really just need someone to talk to. There is a dedicated phone line for people to call to talk. Volunteers take the calls.
- Breakrooms were uninspiring or had electrical/paint problems. Repairs done, other spaces added privacy screens, artwork, and window art.
- Reflections meetings to provide opportunities for Laboratory Animal Professionals to come together to pay tribute to our research animals and to one another.



What have our challenges been and how have we overcome them?

- The first challenge was support for specific breakroom improvements, electric repair and painting.
- Website took time to evolve. Special thanks to Holly Nguyen, committee member.

Where have we been? In short, all over!

- American Association for Laboratory Animal Science conferences, 2017, '18. TX, MD
- Laboratory Animal Welfare Training Exchange in 2017, 19. PA, TN
- Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research in 2017, '18, '19. LA, OH, WA
- Northwest Association for Biomedical Research-IACUC 2017, '18, '19. WA
- World Veterinary Association Congress, 2018. Spain
- International One Health Conference, 2018. Canada
- Association of Zoos and Aquariums Annual Conference, 2018. WA



What are our future plans?

Currently working on a charter for our committee, and guidelines for member expectations.

Work in progress items include:

- Dedication space/commemoration.
- Getting all the Box Project boxes in place.
- Finding additional training and courses for committee members to grow.

What have been our big successes?

- Getting the endpoint stickers in place.
- Improving the breakroom environments.
- Having someone to talk to and resources for referral.
- Website full of information and ideas for self care which is critical to combat CF.
- Getting out to conferences.



Where are we going?

A few goals:

- Annual commemoration and dedication area where people can gather to remember and honor the animals that were in their care or study.
- To get all of the box project boxes in place. They provide a way for people to express themselves anonymously about the animals in their care. Handmade and donated.



What were our biggest surprises?

- The annual commemoration was not a big factor during the needs assessment.
- Endpoint notifications mattered across the board, not just for primates and larger species.



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