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## Moral distress and burnout syndrome: What we can do?

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Moral distress is a term increasingly used in healthcare to describe the anger and other emotions of healthcare professionals that appear when they feel unable to perform their job properly. Moral distress is a kind of pain or anger that affects the body, mind, and communication skills, and occurs in response to situations in which the individual is aware of a moral problem 1.

Burnout syndrome has been defined as a psychological syndrome resulting from a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors while at work<sup>2</sup>.

Burnout syndrome manifests when work-related stress exceeds a person's adaptive level, or when a person's coping mechanism cannot contain the stress<sup>3,4</sup>.

Research on moral distress worldwide<sup>5,6</sup> suggests that nurses have moderate to high levels of moral distress. In Latvia, research on this topic is only beginning. Existing research shows that anaesthesia and intensive care nurses have an average level of distress and are more distressed when they must care for more patients than they can do ( $M=1.98$ ).

Analysing the world studies<sup>7,8</sup> and taking into account the interpretation of the results of the Maslach Burnout Inventory subscale, it can be concluded that in several cases, anaesthesia and intensive care unit nurses are at risk of burnout syndrome.

Comparing the obtained data and the results of studies conducted in other countries, it can be concluded that Latvia has lower work capacity and professional achievements and a higher level of emotional exhaustion, which indicates pronounced burnout syndrome.

We know that nurses have average to high levels of moral distress and burnout. We need to create preventive measures and develop educational programmes on moral distress. Employers are responsible for averting complications and problems that may contribute to moral distress in the workplace and, and if possible, creating solutions that improve the working environment. Thus, contributing to the provision of better-quality health care

### Biography

Olga Cerela-Boltunova began her career in the operating room as an anesthesiology and intensive care nurse. She developed and presented her master's thesis: "Moral Distress of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care Nurses." Since 11/2020, she has been a senior nurse in the anesthesiology department at Riga Maternity Hospital. Received the Latvian Nurse of the Year award in 2021. Since 2022 is a doctoral student at Riga Stradiņš University in the health care program. Her main time is devoted to the study of moral distress in intensive care nurses and the study of burnout syndrome.

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