

MEDIA RELEASE

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Webinar to offer sustainable strategies for guarding against nurse burnout

Burnout has become the defining struggle of the nursing profession in recent years, a phenomenon that philosopher-turned nurse Professor Mark Lazenby knows too well.

On numerous occasions throughout his career, the emotional toll of nursing has cast doubt on Professor Lazenby's calling to healthcare.

"Healthcare is both deeply rewarding and emotionally taxing. The very qualities that make it meaningful—compassion, ethical engagement, and human connection—can also leave us susceptible to burnout," Professor Lazenby said.

But one unique concept has helped sustain his passion for nursing.

This month, Professor Lazenby will explore the concept of rational compassion as a strategy for a sustainable nursing workforce in a webinar co-hosted by the Plunkett Centre for Health Ethics, the Faculty of Health Sciences at ACU, and the St Vincents Health Australia Network.

According to Professor Lazenby, nurses can learn from the concept of rational compassion to balance the ultimate paradox of their profession – caring deeply for patients without succumbing to emotional exhaustion.

"Rational compassion treads a middle path," Professor Lazenby said.

"Rather than being a form of cold detachment, it invites us to engage wholeheartedly with patients' needs, while guarding against the emotional overload that can lead to burnout or moral injury."

Similar to self-compassion, another popular concept in psychology, rational compassion can help nursing become a more sustainable, purposeful, and ultimately, fulfilling vocation.

Professor Lazenby is Dean of the University of California (UCI), Irvine, Sue and Bill Gross School of Nursing and is an international expert in psychosocial cancer care. He is also an Adjunct Professor of ACU.

Director of the Plunkett Centre for Health Ethics, Dr Xavier Symons, said the Centre was pleased to host Professor Lazenby.

"Australia's healthcare professionals and particularly nurses are becoming more susceptible to burnout due to staff shortages and an inability to provide whole-person care for patients," Dr Symons said.

"Professor Mark Lazenby's unique philosophical approach to nursing care offers a valuable and sustainable model for workers struggling to feel fulfilled in their professional lives.

"The Plunkett Centre for Health Ethics looks forward to welcoming Professor Lazenby for what will be an enlightening and honest look at nursing as a caring profession."

Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at ACU, Professor Suzanne Chambers AO, said Professor Lazenby was an impressive thought-leader in the healthcare sector.

“Professor Lazenby’s initial academic background as a philosopher, paired with his clinical practice as a registered nurse, gives him a unique perspective on the joys and challenges of nursing,” Professor Chambers said.

“As someone who has experienced the highs and lows of nursing, but also looks at life’s bigger questions through the eyes of a nurse, his insights on the way nurses navigate various constraints to find meaning and purpose will be invaluable.”

Register for Professor Mark Lazenby’s webinar on Thursday 27 February at the [Plunkett Centre for Health Ethics website](#) or email plunkett@acu.edu.au.