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Caring for Caregivers: Processing Loss and Building Sustained Resilience Via Mindful-Compassion Art Therapy (MCAT)

End of life care professionals are prone to burnout and compassion fatigue given the intense emotional and existential nature of their work. Previous research has provided strong evidence that support the inclusion of art therapy within clinical supervision for it can effectively reduce work-related stress and enhance emotional health. Integrating the practice of mindfulness meditation in art therapy based supervision, with reflective awareness complementing emotional expression, has immense potential for self-care and collegial support, of which could ultimately cultivate compassion and sustained resilience among those immersed in the fields of palliative care and bereavement support. This plenary lecture presents the theoretical underpinnings and clinical framework of Mindful Compassion Art Therapy (MCAT), as well as, the findings of a Randomized Wait-List Control Trial that assess its efficacy for reducing burnout and promoting holistic wellness among 56 palliative care professionals in Singapore. Results from within-subject ANOVA show that the amalgamation of mindful-compassion meditation with creative emotional expression is critically effective in reducing work-related exhaustion, while promoting positive death attitude, ego-resilience, non-judgmental awareness, self-compassion, and quality of life for all study participants. Results from between-subject ANOVA provide further evidence to support MCAT's efficacy in the reduction of stress and the promotion of resilience. Moreover, results from repeated measure ANOVA show that many of these improvements are maintained six weeks after intervention, reflecting MCAT's clinical sustainability. Narratives and experiences of MCAT's participants will be shared to illuminate the inner workings of this novel and promising psycho-intervention modality for enhancing end of life care provision via caring of caregivers.



Dr Andy Hau Yan Ho is Assistant Professor of Psychology in the School of Social Sciences at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work and Thanatology from the University of Hong Kong as well as a Doctor of Education in Lifelong Learning from the University of Nottingham. He is an elected member of the prestigious International Work Group on Death Dying and Bereavement, a Fellow in Thanatology, a Marriage and Family Therapist, and a Mindfulness Practitioner. Andy specializes in the research and teaching of public health palliative care, dignified and compassionate hospice and

bereavement care, life and death education, psychosocial gerontology, art and wellbeing, holistic therapy and community empowerment. Based on this body of work, he has produced many acclaimed population health campaigns and short film documentaries; authored over 50 books, chapters, and articles in prominent journals such as *Age and Ageing*, *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, *Death Studies* and *The Gerontologist*; as well as presented over 100 keynotes, invited, and conference presentations across the globe. Andy's social and scholarly contributions have been recognized with distinction by the Association of Death Education and Counseling, the International Palliative Care Network, the International Academy of the Visual Arts, the Hong Kong Hospital Authority, and the Hong Kong International Cancer Congress.