

Scientific Literature Review Shows Health Care Delivered with Kindness and Compassion Leads to Faster Healing, Reduced Pain

Dignity Health and Stanford University Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education announce partnership to study impact of compassion and kindness in health care

SAN FRANCISCO – November 12, 2014 – Research presented today by neurosurgeon Dr. James R. Doty, M.D., at the inaugural Compassion and Healthcare Conference at Fort Mason shows that health care delivered with kindness not only reduces the duration and severity of the common cold¹, but can also lead to improved patient outcomes, including faster healing of wounds², and a reduction in pain³ and anxiety⁴. In some instances, the statistical significance of kindness-oriented care on improved outcomes was “larger than the effect of aspirin on reducing [a heart attack] or smoking on male mortality.”⁵

The review was sponsored by Dignity Health and performed by the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE) at the Stanford University School of Medicine.

“This scientific literature review clearly demonstrates that while medicine holds the power to cure, care delivered with kindness and compassion can speed the healing process and lead to better outcomes for patients and caregivers alike,” said Dignity Health president/CEO, Lloyd Dean. “I believe our partnership with Stanford University’s CCARE will help us care for our patients’ mind, body, and spirit more effectively.”

“In every domain of life and especially in health care where fundamentally we are focused on those suffering, kindness and compassion have a profound positive effect,” said Stanford University CCARE’s Founder and Director, Dr. James Doty. “Human kindness, science, and technology form a powerful combination that can save lives, create the environment for healing and by doing so decrease cost.”

The research found that kinder care and better information sharing as a result of compassionate practices can lead to a range of improved health outcomes, including:

- Faster healing of wounds,²
- reduced pain,³
- reduced anxiety,⁴
- reduced blood pressure,⁴
- shorter hospital stays,³ and
- even shorter duration and severity of the common cold.¹

The scientific literature review also found that kinder care improved the relationship between caregivers and patients, resulting in a number of significant benefits. Specifically, it found that research suggests that “effective information sharing and kindness in clinical interactions yields greater information sharing between patient and care provider, contributes to more accurate diagnosis, increases effectiveness of treatment planning, and boosts the likelihood that patients will follow recommended treatment protocols.”^{6, 7, 8, 9, 10}

A kinder work environment benefits caregivers as well, who are likely to feel more engaged, less exhausted, and have more satisfied patients.¹¹ And according to the scientific literature review, patients who receive kinder care also indicate greater satisfaction with their care.¹²

This is the first step in an ongoing effort by Dignity Health and Stanford University’s CCARE to study the effects of kindness in health care.

“We look forward to translating what we’ve learned into practices our caregivers can apply across the entire Dignity Health organization,” Dean added. “We’re excited that our ongoing partnership with Stanford University’s CCARE has yielded actionable, replicable recommendations that can influence the way medicine is practiced.”

For more information, visit dignityhealth.org/compassionweek or ccare.stanford.edu.

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About CCARE

The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE) at Stanford University School of Medicine was founded in 2008 with the explicit goal of promoting, supporting, and conducting rigorous scientific studies of compassion and altruistic behavior. CCARE collaborates with neuroscientists, behavioral scientists, geneticists and biomedical researchers to examine the physiological and psychological correlates of compassion and altruism.

About Dignity Health

Dignity Health, one of the nation’s largest health care systems, is a 20-state network of nearly 9,000 physicians, 56,000 employees, and more than 400 care centers, including hospitals, urgent and occupational care, imaging centers, home health, and primary care clinics. Headquartered in San Francisco, Dignity Health is dedicated to providing compassionate, high-quality and affordable patient-centered care with special attention to the poor and underserved. In FY14, Dignity Health provided nearly \$2 billion in charitable care and services. For more information, please visit our website at www.dignityhealth.org. You can also follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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