

The healing power of kindness

A new scientific literature review shows that delivering health care with kindness and compassion leads to faster healing, reduced pain, and shorter hospital stays. The review was sponsored by Dignity Health and conducted by Stanford University's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education.

Kindness is...

Purposeful, voluntary action undertaken with sensitivity to the needs or desires of another person and actively directed toward fostering their well-being or flourishing.¹



How kindness affects patients

 <p>When a physician is a good communicator, patients are MORE THAN TWICE AS LIKELY to listen to their doctor.²</p>	 <p>Patients who experience compassionate care are more likely to divulge important information to their clinicians MAKING DIAGNOSIS MORE ACCURATE.²</p>
 <p>When surgical patients are encouraged by their anesthesiologists during the immediate postoperative period, they HEAL FASTER AND ARE DISCHARGED FROM THE HOSPITAL SOONER because they require 50% less narcotics.³</p>	 <p>The more compassionate care patients received, the LOWER THEIR DIASTOLIC BLOOD PRESSURE became during periods of stress.⁴</p>
 <p>A person who experienced empathy in a medical consultation had a 16% REDUCTION IN OVERALL COLD SEVERITY.⁵</p>	 <p>When patients receive compassionate care at the emergency room, they are LESS LIKELY TO RETURN TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM for the same medical issue.⁶</p>

The statistical significance of kindness-oriented care on improved health outcomes is **LARGER THAN THE EFFECT OF ASPIRIN ON REDUCING A HEART ATTACK, OR SMOKING CESSATION ON MALE MORTALITY.**⁷

How kindness affects caregivers and health care organizations

A kinder work environment benefits caregivers as well, who are likely to feel:⁶

- + more engaged
- + less exhausted
- + have more satisfied patients

By keeping kindness at the core of their health care practice, caregivers:⁸

- + have increased resilience to stress
- + inspire more meaningful work
- + are more immune to burnout

Organizations with a culture of compassion and kindness have:⁶

- + reduced employee exhaustion and absenteeism
- + increased psychological engagement in work
- + greater employee well-being and commitment
- + higher levels of positive emotion for caregivers



References

- ¹ Hamrick, W. S. (2002). *Kindness and the Good Society: Connections of the Heart*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- ² Zolnierck, K., DiMatteo, M. R. (2009). Physician communication and patient adherence to treatment: A meta-analysis. *Medical Care*, 47, 826-834.
- ³ Egbert, L. D., Battit, G. E., Welch, C. E., & Bartlett, M. K. (1964). Reduction of postoperative pain by encouragement and instruction of patients: A study of doctor-patient rapport. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 270, 825-827.
- ⁴ Cosley, Brandon J., et al. "Is compassion for others stress buffering? Consequences of compassion and social support for physiological reactivity to stress." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 46.5 (2010): 816-823.
- ⁵ Raket DP, Hoefft TJ, Barrett BP, Chewing BA, Craig BM, Niu M. (2009). Practitioner empathy and the duration of the common cold. *Family Medicine*, 41:494-501.
- ⁶ Barsade SG, O'Neill OA (2014). What's love got to do with it? A longitudinal study of the culture of companionate love and employee and client outcomes in the long-term care setting. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 0001839214538636.
- ⁷ Kelley, J. M., Kraft-Todd, G., Schapria, L., Kossowsky, J., & Riess, H. (2014). The influence of the patient-clinician relationship on healthcare outcomes: A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *PLOS One*, 9:4, 1-7.
- ⁸ Shanafelt, T. D. (2009). Enhancing the meaning of work: A prescription for preventing physician burnout and promoting patient-centered care. *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 302, 1338 – 1340.