Distress Protocol for qualitative data collection

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Distress Protocol 1: The protocol for managing distress in the context of a research focus group / interview

Distress

• A participant indicates they are experiencing a high level of stress or emotional distress
  OR
• exhibit behaviours suggestive that the discussion/interview is too stressful such as uncontrolled crying, shaking etc

Stage 1 Response

• Stop the discussion/interview.
• One of the researchers (who is a health professional) will offer immediate support
• Assess mental status:
  Tell me what thoughts you are having?
  Tell me what you are feeling right now?
  Do you feel you are able to go on about your day?
  Do you feel safe?

Review

• If participant feels able to carry on;
  resume interview/discussion
• If participant is unable to carry on
  Go to stage 2

Stage 2 Response

• Remove participant from discussion and accompany to quiet area or discontinue interview
• Encourage the participant to contact their GP or mental health provider OR
• Offer, with participant consent, for a member of the research team to do so OR
• With participant consent contact a member of the health care team treating them at for further advice/support

Follow up

• Follow participant up with courtesy call (if participant consents)
  OR
• Encourage the participant to call either if he/she experiences increased distress in the hours/days following the focus group
Distress Protocol 2: The protocol for managing distress in the context of a research focus group /interview management

Pre-data collection
- The researcher should consider the potential physical and psychological impact on the researcher of the participants' description of life experiences
- The researcher should consider how many interviews could be undertaken in a week
- The researcher should be aware of the potential for emotional exhaustion

Data collection stage
- If the topic is potentially sensitive/distressing, data collection to be undertaken by two members of the research team
- Regular scheduled debriefing sessions with a named member of the research team
- May be encouraged to journal their thoughts and feelings which may then become part of fieldwork notes in some research approaches

Analysis
- Is alerted prior to transcription review of potentially "challenging" or "difficult" interviews
- Has regular scheduled debriefing sessions with a named member of the research team

Follow up
- Encourage the researcher to access a research mentor if he/she experiences increased distress in the hours/days following transcription
Distress Protocol 3: The protocol for managing distress in the context of a research focus group/interview transcription

Pre-data collection

- The transcriber should be considered in any research proposal, with a clear indication of how this person will be provided with a "safe" working environment while also maintaining the "quality" of the research.

Ethical review stage

- Be included in the ethical clearance process.
- Is informed of the nature of the research and the type of data.

Pre-transcription

- Is alerted prior to the transcription of potentially "challenging" or "difficult" interviews.
- Has regular scheduled debriefing sessions with a named member of the research team.

During Transcription

- Has prompt access to an appropriate person for crisis counselling.
- Has a clearly documented termination from the transcription process that includes resolution of personal issues which arose as a consequence of the work.
- May be encouraged to journal their thoughts and feelings which may then become part of fieldwork notes in some research approaches.

Follow up

- Follow transcriber up with courtesy call (if transcriber consents) OR
- Encourage the transcriber to call if he/she experiences increased distress in the hours/days following transcription.