Now more than ever, nurses need resilience

I have been heartened over recent weeks by the many nurses and healthcare staff who have led the care of those caught up in the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester, as well as the catastrophic fire in London’s Grenfell Tower.

During and after these horrendous events, I worked alongside and watched staff giving of themselves as capable and caring professionals.

Their remarkable resilience led me to think of John Edmonstone (2013), who rightly asks: ‘If healthcare staff and organisations cannot care for themselves, how can they care for the people they exist to serve?’

This is not a new concept:

20 years ago, leading nurse author Verena Tschudin (1997) similarly wrote that, for nurses to be able to nurse others, they must also be able to be nurses to themselves.

As nurses, we need to reflect on what it means to be resilient in the face of increasing demands and challenges.

Whether in London, Manchester or elsewhere, we must support colleagues who, not only provide front-line care, but also continue to be exposed to pressures from regular reviews and reorganisations.

We also need to work with limited resources and, sadly, what seems like less investment in staff support and professional development. Unless we find constructive and creative ways to support ourselves and be resilient leaders, our ability to support those we lead and care for comes into question.

It is time for us, as leaders, to demonstrate this resilience, not by what we say, but by what we do.

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