



Mental Health Impacts of Covid 19 in Health Care Workers and Coping Strategies

Asha Bose MSN, RN

Nursing Supervisor, Austin State Hospital, Texas US 78751

Associate Editor; IJNRP

Preceptor Coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid 19) has had a devastating health impact on the world, affected 218 countries and territories around the world with approximately 55.6 million confirmed cases and 1.34 M deaths globally as of November 19, 2020. Healthcare workers are amongst the high-risk group to acquire this infection and death due to direct exposure.

During outbreaks, health workers experienced an enormous emotional burden as they must balance their work life with their parallel duties to their loved ones. Fear about this new disease can be stressful which can lead to high levels of depression, stress, psychological distress, anger, fear, insomnia, and post-traumatic stress disorder in health care workers. Other feelings can include frustration, and boredom over the uncertainty of when life will return to "normal."

A study conducted in China among 230 health care workers showed that overall anxiety (23–44%), severe anxiety (2.17%), moderate anxiety (4.78%), mild anxiety (16.09%), stress disorder (27.4–71%), depression (50.4%), and insomnia (34.0%) resulted from Covid 19.. Anxiety in females was higher than in males (25.67% vs. 11.63%), nurses higher than doctors (26.88% vs. 14.29%).

A study conducted in hospitals with fever clinics for patients with COVID-19 in Wuhan and other regions in China, revealed that participants experienced psychological burden, especially

nurses, women, those in Wuhan, and frontline health care workers directly engaged in the diagnosis, treatment, and care for patients with COVID-19.

Another study revealed that 30.43%, 20.29%, and 14.49% of frontline medical workers in Hubei Province and 23.13%, 13.14%, and 10.64% of frontline medical workers in other regions reported symptoms of depression, anxiety, and insomnia respectively. In addition, 23.33%, 16.67%, and 6.67% of the general population in Hubei Province and 18.25%, 9.22%, and 7.17% of the general population in other regions reported symptoms of depression, anxiety, and insomnia, respectively. The resilience of frontline medical staff outside Hubei Province was higher than that of the general population outside Hubei Province.

W El -Hage et al explains about the health care workers feelings of being inadequately supported, concerns about health of self, fear of taking home infection to family members or others, and not having rapid access to testing through occupational health if needed, being isolated, feelings of uncertainty and social stigmatization, overwhelming workload, or insecure attachment. There is a consensus in all the relevant literature that health care professionals are at an increased risk of high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, addiction and post-traumatic stress disorder, which could have long-term psychological implications.

Pandemics pose significant psychological impacts on health care workers, presenting the need for appropriate psychological interventions, and support measures. Protecting health care professionals is indeed an important component of public health measures to address large-scale health crises. Based on research, the development and implementation of mental health assessment, support, treatment, and services are inevitable at this time to overcome the pandemic.

COVID-19-specific psychological interventions for medical staff in China included psychological intervention support teams, psychological counselling, availability of helpline, establishment of shift systems in hospitals, online platforms for medical assistance, incentives, providing adequate breaks and time offs, providing a place to rest and sleep, leisure activities such as yoga, meditation and exercise, and motivational sessions. Protecting the well-being of health care workers, through appropriate measures is very necessary to cope with such national emergencies.

Coping strategies like taking breaks, eating healthy foods, exercising, and using the buddy system can help to prevent and reduce burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Check for the signs and symptoms of these in yourself and people around you to help each other.

SAMHSA recently issued a tip sheet with advice to support behavioral health during periods of social distancing or quarantine that result from a disease outbreak.

- Avoid 24/7 watching of news programming for updates on COVID-19 because it may lead to increased anxiety.
- Constant media reporting during a public health crisis may create impressions of increased risk and danger to people. Look to credible sources issuing guidelines and recommendations, such as the CDC and World Health Organization, which often serve as the primary source for

media outlets. Sign up for emergency alerts through local governments.

- Talking with loved ones while in isolation can help reduce levels of anxiety and boredom. In this digital world, there are a variety of ways to stay in contact with people, including phone, email, text, and social media. Video calling platforms allow face-to-face interactions from the comfort of your home. watch your screen time and take enough breaks. Playing online games with friends and family can also offer an engaging way to feel connected.
- Physical health can play a role in mental health. Take time to relax by stretching, practicing deep-breathing exercises, or meditating. Enjoy fun activities. Keep a journal listing the positive things in life.
- Talk to your colleagues and receive support from one another. Infectious outbreaks can isolate people. Tell your story and listen to others.
- Don't feel upset for seeking advice if you have any difficulty in taking decisions.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink or don't drink alcohol at all. Avoid using alcohol and drugs as a way of dealing with fear, anxiety, boredom and social isolation.
- Practice good sleep hygiene and enjoy plenty of sleep which help to improve the immunity.

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