

# The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Mental Health of Healthcare Professionals

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges to healthcare systems worldwide and has significantly affected the mental well-being of healthcare professionals. Frontline healthcare workers (HCWs) have been exposed not only to increased occupational risks but also to substantial psychological burden. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on HCWs. A systematic search was conducted in Greek and English electronic databases including Medline, PubMed, Google Scholar, Cochrane Library, and Embase. Fifteen studies were identified, and ten were selected for analysis. Findings indicate that healthcare professionals frequently experience anxiety, depression, burnout, insomnia, stress-related disorders, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Contributing factors include fear of infection, prolonged working hours, inadequate personal protective equipment, social stigma, role conflict, quarantine, misinformation, and concerns about family safety. The evidence highlights the urgent need for structured psychological support systems, regular mental health screening, and multidisciplinary intervention programs at both regional and national levels to safeguard the mental well-being of healthcare professionals during pandemic crises.

**Keywords:** Psychological Stress, Mental Health, Psychiatric Issues, Covid-19, Novel Corona Virus and Hew.

## Introduction

Currently, people worldwide face a severe healthcare crisis, that is, the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, pandemic situations require intense and immediate responses in terms of healthcare, with thousands of healthcare workers (HCWs), either directly (e.g., physicians, nurses) or indirectly (e.g., aides, laboratory technicians, and medical waste handlers) delivering care to patients, fighting at the frontline to address the challenges posed to healthcare systems. Front-line healthcare workers (HCW) are health workers who play a crucial role in providing care to infected people. Existing literature supports that a pandemic, apart from causing mortality and physical morbidities, also leads to tremendous mental health problems in the sufferers as well as in the non-infected population [1].

The purpose of the literature review is to highlight the psychological effects caused to HCW due to COVID-19.

## Materials and Methods

A systematic search in Greek and English databases and websites such as Medline, PubMed, Google Scholar, Cochrane Library, and Embase. Fifteen studies were found ten of which were used for the purposes of this review [2]. For the research, the following keywords were used: psychological stress, mental health, psychiatric issues, COVID-19, corona, novel corona virus and HCW.

## Results

Front-line HCWs often suffer from anxiety, depression, burnout, exhaustion, insomnia, stress-related disorders, poorly perceived self-health, depersonalization, low personal achievement, and lack of control. Irrespective of getting exposed or being infected people can develop a fear of falling ill or dying, worry excessively or feel anxious, helplessness, and have a tendency to blame other people who have been infected. The mental or psychiatric illnesses individuals may develop during the Covid-19

pandemic can vary from depression, anxiety, panic attacks, somatic symptoms, and posttraumatic stress disorder, to delirium, psychosis and even suicidality [3]. Many biological, psychological and social/environmental factors and their interplay predispose an individual to an increased risk of mental health problems such as the risk of exposure to infection, effective risk communication to HCWs (rapidly changing guidelines regarding infection control measures), prolonged work hours, availability of personal protective equipment [4]. Also, there are concerns for personal safety, concerns for one's own family (HCWs role conflict between their role as health professionals and their role as parents or family personnel), the safety of colleagues and the lack of effective treatment for COVID-19 as well as concerns for patient mortality. Furthermore job-related stress, perceived stigma and psychological impact of the isolation (if contracted the infection)/quarantine (if suspected of exposure to infection), with interpersonal distancing playing a major role. Lastly, misinformation/rumor circulated in the social media is also a threat for one's beliefs during periods of crisis, in this case the Covid era.

### Conclusion

COVID-19 pandemic is the latest entrant in the list of pandemics causing infections. Trying to cure patients suffering from the coronavirus poses HCWs at an increased risk for a plethora of mental health problems mentioned above. Being well-informed about how previous pandemics were faced and how other countries are effective in dealing with the Covid pandemic, could mitigate the psychological impact of COVID-19 among the HCWs to a great extent [5]. Health authorities should consider setting up multidisciplinary mental health programs at regional and national levels for dealing with mental health issues and providing psychological support to both patients and HCWs. Evaluation can be conducted by using electronic media through web applications like "We Chat". Regular screening of medical personnel who treat and diagnose patients with COVID-19

would be appropriate to evaluate stress, depression, and anxiety levels in the specific population of interest. Mental health issues of HCWs should be addressed on a regular basis with the use of psychotherapeutic means primarily based on the Stress Adaptation Model for the greater good of HCWs mental health and well-being during challenging times like the Covid era.

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