

Letter to Editor

Implementation of Mandatory Counseling Sessions and Availability of Support Centers for Mental Well Being of Health Care Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Dear Editor,

We would like to highlight the importance of mental well-being of health care workers in this time of covid-19 crisis and also, give a few recommendations to address this issue. Covid-19 has been a constant source of fear, anxiety, and depression throughout 2020 [1-3] and it continues to impact people in 2021 due to its unconstrained spread. COVID-driven anxiety and fear are getting worse with the discovery of recent mutant virus strains and the increasing number of cases

throughout the world. Multiple researches were conducted across the globe and revealed a significantly elevated prevalence of depression, anxiety, insomnia, and emotional distress among health care workers [4-6], particularly the resident trainees and medical students who spend the most time interacting with patients. Self-isolation and social distancing have profoundly affected the mental health of people and health care workers were particularly affected due to extremes of physical, mental, and emotional stress along with pandemic fatigue and fear of getting the disease [1, 4-7].

COVID related mental effects amongst the health care workers are of particular concern as they should be in their best mental and physical state while treating their patients. Mental stress and burnout have always been prevalent in medical students [8, 9] and trainee residents [4, 10] but the recent addition of the pandemic led to an exponential increase in it and the consequences don't seem to be good if it continues for another year or so. We would like to recommend mandatory monthly counseling sessions for all health care workers especially those interacting with COVID patients daily. We would also like to emphasize the widespread availability of support centers for resident trainees and interns to prevent pandemic fatigue and to remove the taboo of seeking help for mental well-being. Personalized care from psychotherapists and psychiatrists should be available to address these mental issues. Developing nations struggle more with these taboos as it is considered bad if a person seeks mental health care. We need to make these sessions mandatory to make them look normal and necessary. It is a basic requirement for a health care professional to be in good mental and emotional wellbeing to avoid jeopardizing patient care and both government and private health care agencies should work on it. Measures like timely counseling sessions, constant support from the departments, and availability of support centers will alleviate some of the disruptions caused by social isolation.

Finally, a healthy working staff will ensure a healthy hospital environment which is extremely important in this time of emotional vulnerability.

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