COVID-19 Impact on the Psychological Health of Health Care Workers

Dr. Brittany Houston, PsyD
Assistant Professor- Population Health UT
Austin Dell Medical School
Behavioral Science Director - Family Medicine
Residency

Objectives

After this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify psychological stressors and impact of a pandemic
2. Discuss COVID-19 's impact on the psychological health of the general population and Health Care Workers (HCW)
3. Understand when it is time to seek help?
4. Recognize the ethical responsibility of self-care across healthcare professional disciplines
5. Outline individual and organizational strategies for resilience and intervention.

INTRODUCTIONS

Please list in the chat:

- Name
- Role in your organization
- 1 thing you would like to learn from today's presentation?

Behavioral health in a Pandemic

Pandemic Related Stressors:

- Uncertainty
- Trauma exposure
- Grief/loss
- Threats or loss to employment/income
- Behavioral health concerns
- Long lasting effects of infection
- Disruptions of rituals/traditions
- Media coverage and depictions
- Social isolation
- Fear of infection
- Lack of consistent engagement in health care/chronic disease management

Psychological reactions to Pandemics

- Maladaptive
  - Substance use
  - Overeating/Poor Health Habits
- Adaptive
  - Electronically connecting to loved ones
  - Keeping a consistent routine
- Ineffective (illusory)
  - Panic buying
  - Hygiene theater
- Psychological Reactance
  - Anti Masking
- Emotional Distress
  - Anxiety
  - Boredom

Behavioral Health in COVID-19

- Behavioral health is among the most commonly reported concerns associated with impact of COVID-19
- Psychological impact appears to be larger than medical impact.
- 25% increase in the global prevalence of depression and anxiety in the first year (WHO, 2022)
- Those at increased risk include:
  - Young people
  - Women
  - Health care workers
  - Pre-existing mental health and physical conditions (asthma, cancer, heart disease)

Healthcare Response to COVID-19: Remember Our Mission !

Behavioral Health in Health Professionals COVID–19

- Collective trauma: HCWs are experiencing the COVID-19 trauma along side the patients they serve
- HCWs Additional Stressors:
  - Long work shifts/work life integration
  - Limited resources
  - PPE discomfort
  - Feeling unprepared
  - Changing protocols
  - Fear of spreading the virus to their families, friends or colleagues
  - Change their routine and narrow down their social support network
  - Secondary Trauma
  - Stigma
  - Superhero Pressure
  - Moral Injury

COVID-19 and Global Behavioral Health Impact on HCWs

Behavioral Health Pooled Prevalence among HCWs:

- Anxiety: 16-42%
- Depression: 14-37.2%
- PTSD/Stress/Distress: 18.6-56.5%
- Insomnia: 23.98-47.3%
- Burnout: 25%

SELF CARE : AN ETHICAL OBLIGATION

AMA CODE: "When physician health or wellness is compromised, so may the safety and effectiveness of the medical care provided. To preserve the quality of their performance, physicians have a responsibility to maintain their health and wellness, broadly construed as preventing or treating acute or chronic diseases, including mental illness, disabilities, and occupational stress"

APA CODE: "Psychologists strive to be aware of the possible effect of their own physical and mental health on their ability to help those with whom they work"

ANA CODE: "The nurse owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to promote health and safety, preserve wholeness of character and integrity, maintain competence, and continue personal and professional growth."

NASW CODE: " Professional self-care is paramount for competent and ethical social work practice. Professional demands, challenging workplace climates, and exposure to trauma warrant that social workers maintain personal and professional health, safety, and integrity. Social work organizations, agencies, and educational institutions are encouraged to promote organizational policies, practices, and materials to support social workers' self-care"

Recognizing signs of Stress

- Feeling irritation, anger, or denial
- Feeling uncertain, nervous, or anxious
- Feeling helpless or powerless
- Lacking motivation

- Feeling tired, overwhelmed, or burned out
- Feeling sad or depressed
- Having trouble sleeping
- Having trouble concentrating

Individuals interventions

- Connect and talk to your coworkers, supervisors, and employees about job stress.
- Remind yourself that you're not alone
- Identify and accept those things which you do not have control over.
- Take action on what you can control
- Give yourself credit and grace/self-compassion; you are vital in fighting this pandemic and doing the best with the resources available.
- Keeping a consistent daily routine when possible

THINGS THAT MATTER

THINGS YOU CAN CONTROL

FOCUS HERE
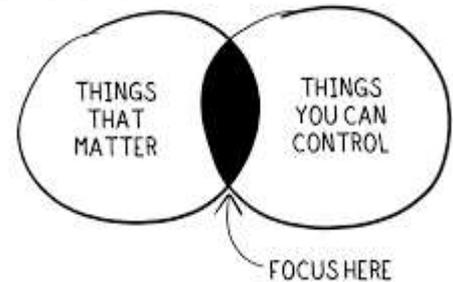
Individuals interventions

- Self-monitoring
- Exercise/Healthy Eating
- Spend time outdoors
- Engage in enjoyable activities
- Stay connected to what is important to you
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media.
- Engage in mindfulness techniques:
  - breathing exercises and meditation
- Ask for help and seek treatment if needed
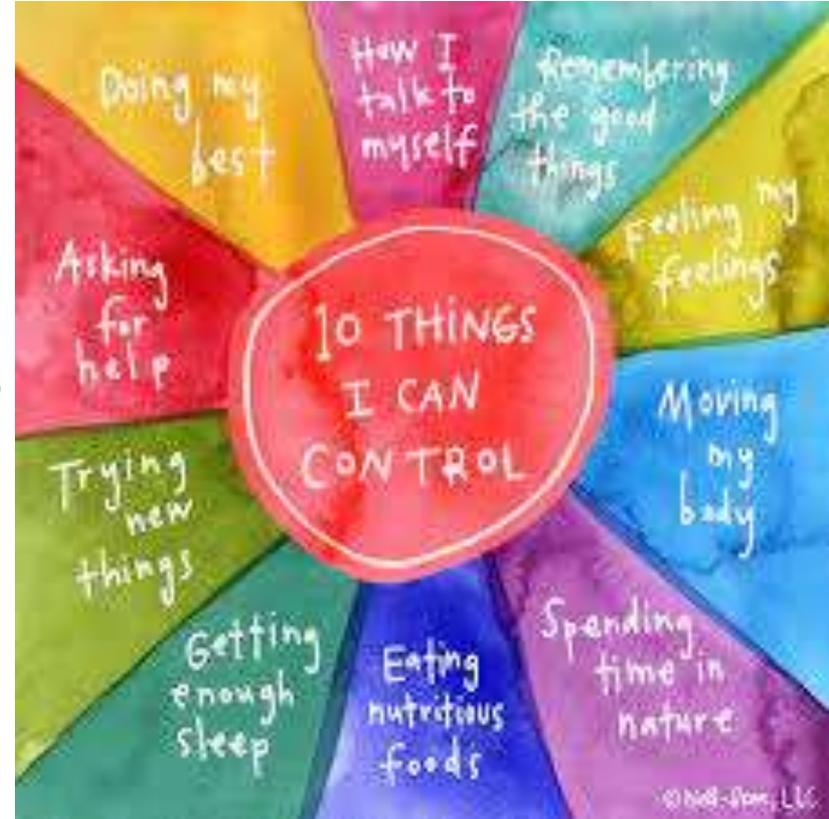
When to seek treatment: Beyond Stress

- Increased stress is normal and expected during COVID-19 pandemic
- <u>Burnout</u>: a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion arising from prolonged, intense stress that has not been addressed often get better with breaks from stressor.
- Seek help when symptoms start to impacting interpersonally, occupationally, social or other areas of functioning
- If you meet criteria for DSM-5 diagnosis
- Individual interventions are not helping

Stress Level

Min   Max

Evidenced–Based Interventions

Anxiety
- Cognitive Behavioral Treatment (CBT)
- Acceptance-Based Treatments (ABTs)

Depression
- Behavioral Activation
- CBT
- ABTs

PTSD
- Cognitive Processing Therapy
- Prolonged Exposure
- CBT

Insomnia
- Cognitive Behavioral Treatment for Insomnia
- Brief Behavioral Treatment for Insomnia

Where to get treatment?

- Ask your Primary Care Provider
  - Integrated BHC in Primary Care
  - Referral to Behavioral Health Provider in the Community
- Contact Health Insurance to obtain list of In network Providers
- Employee Assistance Programs
- **When seeking a community-based provider, ask about their experience treating HCWs (specific expertise needed)

Organizational interventions

- Recognize impact of collective trauma
- Create psychologically safe and trauma informed environments
- Regularly and supportively monitor well-being and psychosocial needs.
- Provide brief, regular forums to update staff on the status of the practice and how management is addressing challenges.
- Provide mechanisms for staff to express their concerns and ask questions
- Make psychosocial support as much as a priority as their physical safety
- Encourage communication with trusted colleagues in addition to accessing your employee assistance program.

Resources

- Mental Health America: https://mhanational.org/covid19/frontline-workers

- American Medical Association: https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/managing-mental-health-covid-19.pdf

- Research informed Apps:
  - Overall: Moodfit
  - Meditation: Headspace
  - Stress: iBreathe
  - Anxiety: MindShift
  - Sleep: CBT-i Coach
  - Mood boost: Happify

References

- Taylor, Steven. "The psychology of pandemics." *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* 18 (2022): 581-609
- Chutiyami, M., Cheong, A. M., Salihu, D., Bello, U. M., Ndwiga, D., Maharaj, R., ... & Kannan, P. (2021). COVID-19 pandemic and overall mental health of healthcare professionals globally: a meta-review of Systematic Reviews. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, *12*.
- Ornell, F., Halpern, S. C., Kessler, F. H. P., & Narvaez, J. C. D. M. (2020). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of healthcare professionals. *Cadernos de saude publica*, *36*, e00063520.
- Center for Disease Control and Preventions Mental Health. https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/healthcare-workers-first-responders/index.html .
- World Health Organization, (2022, March 2). COVID-19 triggers 25% Increase in Prevalence of Anxiety and Depression Worlidwide. https://www.who.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-25-increase-in-prevalence-of-anxiety-and-depression-worldwide#:~:text=Images%2FJustin%20Paget-,COVID%2D19%20pandemic%20triggers%2025%25%20increase%20in%20prevalence,of%20anxiety%20and%20depression%20worldwide
- American Medical Association (2022, April 18). Managing Mental Health during Covid-19. https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/managing-mental-health-during-covid-19
- Every-Palmer S, Jenkins M, Gendall P, Hoek J, Beaglehole B, Bell C, et al.. Psychological distress, anxiety, family violence, suicidality, and wellbeing in New Zealand during the COVID-19 lockdown: a cross-sectional study. *PLoS ONE.* (2020) 15:e0241658. 10.1371/journal.pone.0241658