

SYNOPSIS

02/28/2020

Review of “Mental health care for medical staff in China during the COVID-19 outbreak”

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One-Minute Summary

- The authors **assessed the mental health of health care workers (HCWs)** caring for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) patients at the Second Xiangya Hospital of Central South University (Changsha, Hunan, China), which is the largest tertiary hospital in Hunan province.
- A **psychological intervention plan** was developed, including:
 - Development of **online courses** to guide HCWs to deal with psychological problems
 - A **psychological assistance hotline**
 - **Various group activities** to release stress
- However, **HCWs were reluctant to participate** in individual or group sessions and **refused psychological help**, despite showing signs of irritability and psychological distress.
- The **immediate worries of HCWs**, identified in 30-minute interviews (N = 13), were dealing with patients who refused quarantine or were not accepting of medical advice; worries about personal protective equipment (PPE) shortages; and feeling helpless when treating severely ill patients. HCWs were also concerned about bringing the virus home and infecting their family members.
- Based on feedback from interviews, **the hospital provided HCWs with:**
 - A place for HCWs to rest and temporarily self-isolate from their family
 - Daily living essentials and food
 - Help preparing and sending videos to their family members while away from home
 - Training to identify and respond to psychological problems in patients
 - Security to help with uncooperative patients
 - Hospital-based guidelines on PPE use
 - Leisure activities and methods to cope with stress
 - Psychological counsellors who visited HCWs in the rest area to discuss challenges

Additional Information

- The authors highlight that the mental health of HCWs is vital to COVID-19 response efforts; however, they acknowledge that the best method to support HCW mental health is not clear.

PHO Reviewer’s Comments

- The authors base their results on a study within a single health care facility, where they interviewed a small number of HCWs. Readers must use caution when interpreting these results, as they may not be generalizable to all HCWs treating COVID-19 patients.

Citation

Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Review of "Mental health care for medical staff in China during the COVID-19 outbreak". Toronto, ON: Queen’s Printer for Ontario; 2020.

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