**Psychological impact of COVID-19 amongst health professionals in a tertiary care Hospital**

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**ABSTRACT:**

**Background**: As the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic is sweeping across the world rapidly the mental health of health professionals is getting at stake.

**Objective:** of this study is to assess and highlight psychosocial impact of COVID-19 amongst health professionals in a tertiary care hospital so that proper interventions can be done to alleviate its negative psychiatric effects.

**Methods:** It is a Cross-sectional, descriptive interview-based study survey at department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Postgraduate Medical Institute/Lahore General Hospital Lahore. A self-designed questionnaire was distributed amongst health care professionals (doctors and nurses from different specialties) during April and May 2020.

**Results:** Three hundred health professionals participated in this survey.100% found themselves as health hazard to their family and 90% were having fear of getting socially distant from them.70%- 80% were having anxieties related with going to their job, getting infected, being quarantined and increasing infection rate amongst health professionals. More than 70% were not satisfied with hospital supply of PPES, safety equipment and infection control policy.74% were concerned with long working hours and 79% even wanted to quit from their job.

**Conclusion:** Health care professionals are working on frontline with immense psychological stress which may cause negative psychiatric effects on their mental health. So proper policies and interventions should be implemented to provide them psychological support for their better mental health and resilience.

**Key words:** COVID-19, Pandemic, Psychological impact, Health professionals.

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 **INTRODUCTION**

World health organization (WHO) officially announced novel coronavirus as the “Coronavirus disease 2019” on February 11, 2020(1).This lethal virus has currently affected more than 200 countries and it is a risk for further spread globally(2).Rising rate of infection detection in medical workers is making situation even more alarming. As a frontline warrior along with physical health risks they are also suffering through mental trauma such as anxiety regarding high risk for infection, inadequate equipment for safety from contagion, isolation, exhaustion and lack of contact with family(3).

knowledge about the infection and its spread is upgrading frequently and causing rise in concerns regarding safety and protective equipment(4).This is an unprecedented crises and major health hazard to our population so it is crucial to understand its associated psychological impact on our health professionals who are fighting on frontline against an invisible enemy labelled as WORLD WAR V(5,10). So this study aimed to assess health professional burden of psychosocial trauma working in a tertiary care hospital during COVID 19 outbreak and identifying the problems that need to be addressed in time so that urgent policy guidelines should be made for mental well-being of health care professionals. This will go long way to prevent long term and persistent psychological issues as its not known how far we have to live and fight with this pandemic in future(12,13).

**METHODS:**

It was a cross-sectional, descriptive, interview based study survey during April and May 2020.After taking informed consent we distributed self-designed questionnaire amongst health professionals (only doctors and nurses from different specialties) working in Lahore General Hospital Lahore. Survey was consisted of 20 questions containing information about mental stress, depression, fears and anxiety related with disease and its spread, satisfaction and ease in using personal protective equipment (PPEs), personal& family health hazards and concerns about adequacy of hospital infection prevention and control policies. Convenience sampling technique was used .Data was collected and analyzed using descriptive stats as frequencies and percentages.

**RESULTS:**

300 health professionals participated in the study. Response rate was 100%. Majority (83 %)of the health professionals were having fear from going to their workplace, getting infections from patients 96% and being quarantined 78%. As far as hospital administration is concerned 83% of health professionals were not satisfied with the SOP’s and infection prevention measures. 74% wanted to get themselves tested for COVID-19. Regarding counseling of the patients for testing and treating the patients, the response was not significantly different( 52% &50%).71% percent of health not satisfied with the adequate provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and also 64% not comfortable with wearing PPE while working.

 100% professionals felt themselves as a health hazard to their families and 88% found it difficult to balance between work and family care. 90% felt anxiety about social and physical distancing with their families and friends, 72% felt that social distancing is leading to social boycott, 94% felt their families getting worried about their health, 82% got depressed by increasing disease spread amongst health professionals. 74% did not feel satisfied with their working hours and 79% wanted to quit from their jobs.

**DISSCUSSION:**

With the advent of COVID-19 in Pakistan health professionals have been under physical and mental stress. In our study the psychosocial burden includes fears for being high risk for infection, inadequate equipment for safety from contagion, isolation, anxiety and lack of contact with family. A recent study involving 1563 health professionals reported more than half (50.7&) of participants reported depressive symptoms,44.7% anxiety and36.1% sleep disturbance (5,11).The short and long term effects of the pandemic may trigger psychological issues that could have detrimental effects on physical and mental well being of health professionals, resembling the situation during SARS and H1N1 epidemics(6,7)). Similar experience have been found in emerging scientific literature and media reports in two countries at present China and Italy(8), which are more heavily hit by COVID-19. A very recent study among healthcare professionals in tertiary infectious diseases hospital for COVID-19 in China revealed a high incidence of stress and anxiety disorder among front line health staff (9).The health professionals are at high risk of getting infection, and also their great fear is of transmitting it to their family and close contacts. They may also have to face psychological effects of being quarantined (14, 15 16).Moreover they expect that hospitals should be provided with adequate supply of safety equipment and PPEs.It is also necessary for the government to give them full support and security in this adverse situation (17, 18).

**LIMITATIONS:**

This study is showing just TIP OF THE ICE-BERG. More research is required in future to know about short and long term mental health hazards to health care workers.

**CONCLUSION:**

Our study concludes that health care professionals are working on frontline with immense psychological stress so there is an urgent need to redesign policies to provide urgent psychological support to this vulnerable group to improve their quality of work, mental resilience and well-being.

Psychosocial impact of COVID 19 among Health professionals. n=300

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Question | Number  | Percentage |
| 1-Feel dread (fear) going to work?YesNo Don’t Know | 249456 | 83152 |
| 2-Sleep and eat well?YesNo Don’t Know | 15613212 | 52444 |
| Question | Number  | Percentage |
| 3-Feel burden excessively?YesNo Don’t Know | 14114415 | 47485 |
| 4-Feel fear of acquiring disease from patients?YesNo Don’t Know | 288120 | 9640 |
| 5-Fear of being quarantined? YesNo Don’t Know | 234633 | 78211 |
| 6-Want to treat disease patients?YesNoDon’t Know  | 15012921 | 50437 |
| 7-Face difficulty in counseling the patients about getting tested?YesNo Don’t Know | 15612618 | 52426 |
| 8-Want yourself to get tested for disease?YesNo Don’t Know | 222726 | 74242 |
| 9-Feel that your hospital administration is concerned about transmission of disease to health professionals?YesNo Don’t Know  | 452496 | 15832 |
| 10-Feel satisfied with SOP’s of hospital administration regarding disease prevention and its transmission?YesNo Don’t Know | 4824012 | 16804 |
| 11-Feel satisfied with the provision PPE’s by hospital administration?YesNo Don’t Know | 812136 | 27712 |
| 12-Feel comfortable working while wearing PPE’s?YesNo Don’t Know | 1051923 | 35641 |
| Question | Number  | Percentage |
| 13-Feel yourself as a health hazard to your family/kids?YesNo Don’t Know | 30000 | 10000 |
| 14-Feel difficult to balance work and family care?YesNo Don’t Know | 2642115 | 8875 |
| 15-Feel that your family is getting much worried about your health?YesNo Don’t Know | 282126 | 9442 |
| 16-Get depressed and anxious after hearing and watching disease spread in health professionals on social and public TV?YesNo Don’t Know  | 246486 | 82162 |
| 17-Feel satisfied with the duration of your working hours? YesNo Don’t Know | 6622212 | 22744 |
| 18-Want to quit your job?YesNo Don’t Know | 602373 | 20791 |
| 19-Feel anxiety of social/Physical distancing resulting in lack of contact with family and friends?YesNo Don’t Know | 270246 | 9082 |
| 20-Feel that social distancing is leading to social boycott? YesNo Don’t Know  | 2167212 | 72244 |

**ETHICAL APPROVAL**

The study was approved by the Ethical Review Committee of Postgraduate Medical Institute, Ameer ud Din Medical College, Lahore, Pakistan, vide PGMI/AMC/LGH/Article/Research No./00-130-20 dated July 30, 2020.

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**Authors’ contribution:**

**NA:** Designed, editing of manuscript and data analysis.

**MA:** Conceived, editing of manuscript.

**MZA:** Data collection.

**FI:** Collection of references.