

## “INFLUENCE OF PANDEMIC ON MENTAL HEALTH OF PEOPLE”

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### **Abstract**

*In this article I have put a small effort to bring attention of readers regarding influence of Pandemic on life later the phenomenon. I have tried to portrait in short importance of mental health wellbeing and mental health interventions needed during pandemic. Nurses as pillars of health organization plays a vital role in care and rehabilitation of people in suffering. This article also shows scope of mental health nursing and its dimensions..*

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Health, Influence, Mental Care

## **INFLUENCE OF PANDEMIC ON MENTAL HEALTH OF PEOPLE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Pandemics are not just a medical phenomenon; they affect individuals and society on many levels, causing disruptions. Dr. Lee Jong-wook, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) said during outbreak of avian influenza pandemic in September 2005 that “failure to take this threat seriously and prepare appropriately will have catastrophic consequences.” “As human impact on the earth increases exponentially, the chances for unpleasant surprises from the microbial world will also grow.” “The new virus spreads quickly because no one has any significant immunity to the novel strain, and the illness it causes can be unusually severe.

### **DEFINITION**

The word Pandemic comes from Greek pan “all” and demos “ people”. An out break of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area and affects an exceptionally high proportion of the population. Eg. H1N1(Swine Flu 2009), Plague(14 th century), etc. WHO declared coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a pandemic on march 11 2020. WHO explains pandemic into six phases divided into three - inter pandemic period, pandemic alert period and pandemic period ( increased and sustained transmission in general population). Pandemics are identified by their geographic scale rather severity of illness.

## **IMPACTS OF PANDEMIC ON INDIVIDUALS**

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS**

- Social Stigma and Xenophobia are two major aspects of the impact of pandemic infectious outbreaks in society.
- It leads to Panic, stress and Anxiety disorders because of outbreaks and its adverse effect on society.
- Sleep disturbances, and overall lower perceived state of health is of major concern.
- Individuals with mental illness may be particularly vulnerable to the effects of widespread panic and threat.
- Drastic behavioral changes in individuals due to fear in public gathering places and workplaces leading to decline in economic growth and social disruption.
- The uncertain incubation period of the virus and its possible asymptomatic transmission cause additional fear and anxiety

- “infodemic” an overabundance of (mis)information on social media and elsewhere imposes a major risk to public mental health psychiatric disorders, like depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder,
- occurs in high-risk persons, especially survivors and frontline healthcare workers
- People in quarantine may go through boredom, anger, restlessness and frustration

#### ☒ **PHYSICAL FACTORS**

- Most vulnerable group affected during pandemic are old age people because of
- already existing health issues progressive aging factor.
- It leads to widespread increase in morbidity and mortality and higher mortality impact
- on low middle income countries

#### ☒ **SOCIAL FACTORS**

- Quarantine and mitigation measures lead to negative psychosocial effect among
- people at grass root level.
- Mainly affects health care workers, their ability to work,
- inability to meet staffing demands adversely affects their family life.
- Stigmatized groups are particularly vulnerable during epidemics and pandemics
- which put them at increased risk. stigma insists people to hide symptoms of illness to
- avoid discrimination. They may not seek health care when they need it and may
- further isolate themselves, which comes with its own health risks.

#### ☒ **ECONOMIC FACTORS**

- Causes economic damage short term and long term negative impact on economy.
- Increases health sector expenditures because of increase demand of personal
- protective equipments, testing kits, medicines, etc.
- Loss of jobs and financial difficulties persists through out pandemics.

#### ☒ **POLITICAL FACTORS**

- In countries with weak institution history and political instability pandemics causes political stresses and tensions.

### **EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

☒ The basic methods to control pandemic effects are containment and mitigation.

Containment means contact tracing at an early stage and isolating infected individuals to stop the disease from being spread to remaining healthy population, infection control and other counter effective measures

☒ Implement the World Health Organization’s strategic preparedness and response plan for covid-19.

☒ Mitigation measures are means to prevent, reduce or control adverse environmental effects and include restitution for any damage to the environment caused by those effects through replacement, restoration, compensation or any other means

☒ Implementing emergency psychological crisis interventions to reduce the negative psychosocial impact on public mental health, but challenges exist. Public mental

health interventions should be formally integrated into public health preparedness and emergency response plans

- ☑ Implement emergency psychological crisis interventions to reduce the psychosocial effects of the COVID-19 outbreak
- ☑ Implement joint prevention and control strategies at the city, municipal, and provincial levels,
- ☑ The crisis intervention team comprises psychological outreach teams led by psychiatrists and mental health professionals and psychological support hotline teams,
- ☑ Policy makers should plan policies protecting mental health of people,
- ☑ Promote use of telemedicine to combat barriers to access quality care for mental health
- ☑ Involve your family and children in various indoor fun activities like exercise, watching movies, fun games, meditation, reading etc during lockdown and quarantine.
- ☑ Strive to ensure getting enough sleep each night, healthy dietary pattern, safe life style patterns etc.
- ☑ Be connected to friends and loved ones though email or social media
- ☑ Plan effective communication system to render information and resources
- ☑ To strengthen public management capacities
- ☑ Building up capacity to meet needed financial demands
- ☑ Plan effective strategies to strengthen core public health infrastructure, including water and sanitation system,
- ☑ Plan effective methods to increase situational awareness, reduction of transmission care for and treatment of ill.
- ☑ Plan interventions for equal distribution of health care facilities among population
- ☑ Community leaders like government officials, business managers, educators, nurses— can improve their communication skills to maximize trust and minimize stress and anxiety among people by Sharing information with empathy and optimism, Being honest and transparent, being a role model,
- ☑ Motivate individuals to develop standard coping strategies, such as spiritual or religious practices or exercising outdoors etc.
- ☑ Should encourage mindfulness, relaxation and cognitive behavioral therapy-based healthy thinking
- ☑ Manage media and information intake: 24-hour news and constant social media updates can make one more worried. Therefore only check the news at set times or limit yourself to a couple of checks a day.
- ☑ Health professionals should follow these- 1. balance of family and work; 2. ensuring reliability, consistency, and time-bound information; 3. education and preparation of the employees and the involved communities; 4. ensuring fairness and addressing ethical concerns; 5. front-end leaders' participation; 6. validating and valuing the front-line staff's contribution; 7. timely addressing of fears and worries among the medical team; and 8. ardent information on medical staff's redeployment to high-risk areas.

☑ Psychiatric treatment team including nursing staff, psychiatrists, case managers, and psychologists and social worker should be established to deliver mental health support to the affected persons and medics. This should be coupled with the creation of appropriate mental health services, facilities, and specialized psychiatric treatment for

patients with comorbid cognitive disorders.

☑ The government and health organizations should ensure secure electronic information-sharing platforms are used to provide and promote telepsychiatry and telemedicine psychological counseling, promote legal information, and eliminate cases of isolation. There should be more enforcement on the awareness of online training in the management of COVID-19.

☑ Time-bound behavioral therapy should be provided to persons exhibiting signs of mental disorders to reduce the cognitive effects of the pandemic. The psychiatrists should also allow for personal adjustment to face the situation which involves the behavioral and emotional responses, psychotherapeutic treatments based on the stress adaptation model.

### IMPORTANCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

Psychological first aid (PFA) is an early intervention that emphasize on mental health of the affected survivors by providing psychosocial support during outbreaks like COVID-19. It is a tool designed to mitigate acute distress and assess the need for continued mental healthcare through compassionate and supportive care. PFA is important to bridge the collaborative services and coping information among COVID-19 affected individuals.

Several PFA frameworks and models are currently available for emergency management.

### JOHNS HOPKIN'S PFA TOOL CONSISTS OF THE 'RAPID'

The model with five steps –

*step one*, rapport and reflective listening: used throughout the interaction with a person in crisis and the goal is to make initial contact and establish rapport through active and reflective listening techniques such as paraphrasing with empathy;

*step two*, assessment: focuses on the evaluation of psychological and basic physical needs;

*step three*, prioritization: emphasizes the importance of triage principles by focusing on the severity of cases that needs emergent care;

*step four*, intervention: aims to mitigate distress and try to functional capacity using cognitive and behavioral interventions, and also provide basic needs; and

*step five*, disposition and follow-up: the final step is a continuous process until stabilization of the situation, through providing constant support, meeting their needs, and regular monitoring.

Fundamentally, all tools aim to give psychological support to survivors, offer practical help, contact, and engage, provide safety and comfort, and gather information on the present concerns and needs. Thus, the PFA is an essential tool for clinicians and the survivors in addressing stress-related reactions after traumatic events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

### MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTION PLANNING ROLE OF NURSE

- Efforts to increase health protective behaviors and response behaviors: Individuals under stress will need reminders to take care of their own health and limit potentially harmful behaviors. This will include taking medication, giving medications to elderly and children, and when to go for vaccination.
- Good risk communication following risk communication principles: The media can either amplify skepticism or promote a collaborative approach. Interactions with the media

- will be both critical and challenging.
- Good safety communication: Promoting clear, simple, and easy-to-do measures can be effective in helping individuals protect themselves and their families.
- Public education: Educating the public not only informs and prepares, it enlists them as partners in the process and plan. Education and communications will need to address fears of contagion, danger to family and pets and mistrust of authority and government.
- Facilitating community directed efforts: By organizing communal needs and directing action toward tangible goals, this will help foster the inherent community resiliency toward recovery.
- Utilizing evidence-informed principles of psychological first aid: These basic principles include: —Establish safety; identify safe areas and behaviors —Maximize individuals' ability to care for self and family and provide measures that allow individuals and families to be successful in their effort— Teach calming skills and maintenance of natural body rhythms (e.g., nutrition, sleep, rest, exercise) —Maximize and facilitate connectedness to family and other social supports to the extent possible (this may require electronic rather than physical presence) —Foster hope and optimism while not denying risk.
- Care for first responders to maintain their function and workplace presence: This will require assistance to ensure the safety and care of their families. First responders will be comprised of a diverse population, to include medically trained personnel to bystanders with no experience.
- Mental Health Surveillance: Ongoing population level estimates of mental health problems in order to direct services and funding. Surveillance should address PTSD, depression and altered substance use as well as psychosocial needs (eg housing, transportation, schools, employment) and loss of critical infrastructure necessary to sustaining community function.
- Faith-Based Organizations: The involvement of faith-based partners during a pandemic event will be crucial to promote well-being and spiritual, social and emotional strength for Missouri's citizens.

## CONCLUSION

As health compromises of balance among physical, mental, social and spiritual well being when Biological threat attacks society, it does not just strike a group of individuals but attacks the whole community completely. Social distancing is 'actually physical distancing.' 'Socially, we can remain even closer.' Everyone differs in their need for control, tolerance for uncertainty, and their ability to be resilient. It is compassion and simply looking out for each other that will support health—physical and mental—in the days to come. Epidemics never affect all populations equally and inequalities can always drive the spread of infections. As mental health and public health professionals, we call for adequate and necessary attention to people with mental health disorders in the COVID-19 epidemic.

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