



Supporting Health Care Provider *Mental Health & Wellness* during COVID-19

Health care providers (HCPs), which include all direct care staff, find their work tremendously rewarding. However, the challenges posed by COVID-19 have increased workplace and personal stress for those who work directly with patients.^{1,2} The pandemic's extended nature increases the risk for mental health concerns among HCPs, such as depression, anxiety, anger, insomnia, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and alcohol or drug misuse.³ If unaddressed, these mental health concerns may lead to burnout, compassion fatigue, and even thoughts of suicide.⁴

Burnout

- » Feeling frustrated, irritable, depressed, overwhelmed
- » Feeling like your work does not make a difference
- » Lack of motivation and feeling like you don't care about your work
- » Physical symptoms, e.g., headaches, stomach aches

Compassion Fatigue⁵

- » Decreased ability to feel empathy
- » Dreading going to work
- » Impaired ability to make decisions and care for patients
- » Increased absenteeism

Potential Barriers to HCPs Seeking Help

Health care providers may not talk with colleagues about their mental health concerns or seek mental health care for many reasons. Here are a few examples:⁶

- » **Clinicians** tend to focus on their patients' needs rather than their own.
- » **HCPs** may perceive a clinical culture as one that discourages clinician help-seeking.
- » **Some providers** may have concerns about confidentiality, fitness to practice, and licensure implications.

The Role of Employers and Managers in Supporting Their Employees

Employers and managers can play an essential role in helping staff maintain emotional resilience and well-being. They can provide the following:^{7,8}

- » **A psychologically safe environment and work culture:**
 - Communicate to your HCPs that they are valued.
 - Encourage staff to discuss stress, burnout, and other barriers to well-being.

- Provide recuperation time in work schedules, such as enough break time, realistic shift length, and time off work.
- Provide materials and tools for on-site self-care (e.g., healthy snacks, quiet break room, chargers for phones).

» **Leadership and support:**

- Debrief at the end of a shift and more frequently if needed.
- Check in regularly and proactively.
- Encourage collaboration, peer support, and use of employee assistance program (EAP) services.
- Monitor and promote employee health; reach out to those in need of help.
- Recognize employees for both their work and their self-care.

» **Educating employees:**

- Regularly and supportively educate HCPs about organizational resources and support.
- Remind staff about meeting their basic needs (e.g., sleep, exercise, hydration, and healthy food) and simple self-care practices (e.g., relaxation techniques and mindfulness-based training).
- Provide information on national resources.



Recognize potential barriers



Create a supportive environment



Provide support



Ensure recuperation time



Recognize staff



Monitor and promote staff health



Provide information and resources

National Resources

- » [Disaster Distress Helpline—1-800-985-5990](#): Provides crisis counseling related to any natural or human-caused disaster 24/7.
- » [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline—1-800-273-TALK \(8255\)](#): Provides crisis support 24/7.
- » [Crisis Text Line—Text HOME to 741-741](#): Provides crisis support 24/7.
- » [National Academy of Medicine: Resources](#) include strategies that health care leaders and managers can use to support their clinical staff and self-care strategies for clinicians.

References

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