

COVID-19 for Psychiatrists

Psychological impact

Psychological impact of the illness is largely neglected. Pandemics like this, are not just a medical phenomenon; they tend to affect quality of life in an individual and as a whole, causing social dysfunction. Stigma, xenophobia, mass hysteria and panic are the common offshoots. As the global prevalence increases, people start hoarding medical supplies, isolate themselves physically, restrict social interaction and enter into a constant state of health anxiety even over mild conditions that can mimic the illness, like common cold ¹⁾.

People with mental illness are especially vulnerable to these effects, as are the health-care workers in hospitals and laboratories, the volunteers and social service personnel and those quarantined for prolonged duration. Recent literature states that even though online and at-site psychological services have been initiated in China, the lack of sensitization and training in mental health often adversely affect the performance and health outcome of the medical staff there ²⁾.

In this context, psychiatrists can play pivotal role in supporting the well-being of those affected and their families, the at-risk healthcare staff as well as the public. They are in fact in an unique position to offer a balanced perspective to improve the knowledge, attitude and practices about the illness as well as addressing the generalized anxiety and apprehension. Similar roles have been shown to improve the overall health-care service utilization and efficacy in similar earlier outbreaks like SARS ³⁾.

see Crucial role the psychiatrists can play. ⁴⁾.

Emotional impact

The emotional impact of COVID-19: from medical staff to common people was published by Montemurro from the Department of Neurosurgery, Azienda Ospedaliera Universitaria Pisana (AOUP), Pisa, Italy ⁵⁾.

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