

Obstacles Faced by Nurses Working in Corona Isolation Ward and Their Coping Strategies: A Way Forward to Fight against the Pandemic

Shumaila Sadiq Jiwani^{1*}

¹Registered Nurse, Internal Medicine, Aga Khan University Hospital, Stadium Road, Karachi, Pakistan

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*Corresponding author: Shumaila Sadiq Jiwani

Abstract

Corona Virus has become a huge cause of burnout and frustration among common public in general and among healthcare staff in particular. In some situations healthcare workers are not even able to express their fears, thoughts and experiences. Level of anxiety, depression and physical stress is increasing in health care staff, especially in nurses because of multiple factors. This review article will highlight challenges faced by nurses and other health care staff while caring for patients in COVID-19 isolation wards. Furthermore, through this paper readers will be able to find out some coping strategies to fight with commonly occurring issues during COVID-19 pandemic. Past studies will be presented as literature review to ensure the authenticity and enrichment of content.

Keywords: COVID-19, Nurses, Physical and Psychological health.

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INTRODUCTION

A 34 year old nurse, who was working in ICU, committed suicide because of the fear and distress of infecting others while she was positive for Corona Virus [1]. Corona Virus took breath for the first time in Wuhan, city of China on December 2019. This virus newly identified in humans with symptoms such as flu, fever, body ache, cough and the severe one like pneumonia [2]. In a very short time, this virus declared as sixth public health emergency of international concern by World Health Organization on 30th January, 2020 [3]. Karachi became a first city of Pakistan, where first case of corona virus identified on 26th February, 2020 [3]. Pakistan is still facing a lack of public support in compliance of Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs). From start of this outbreak in a country till current date, healthcare staff including doctors, nurses, phlebotomists and other paramedical staff are facing huge level of burnout and stress [4]. Healthcare workers in Pakistan are fighting with a major challenge of lack in specialised trainings related to use of personal protective equipment [5]. Healthcare staff specifically nurses and doctors as frontline fighters are facing mental stress by putting own and loved ones lives in danger because of constant contact with corona virus positive patients [6]. According to a systematic review healthcare workers are reporting high level of depression and anxiety due to long duty hours and

contact with patients of corona virus [7]. Healthcare staff working in corona virus isolation wards complaint for lack of concentration and body fatigue due many challenges they had to face after occurring of this viral outbreak [8]. As lack of trained staff is already a big concern, we cannot afford losing of the currently working frontline fighters.

Physical and Psychological Impact of COVID-19 on Healthcare staff and their coping strategies

Physical Impact

Outcomes of this viral spread are appearing in healthcare staff as decline in their physical health and well-being. According to an article published by journal "Brain, Behavior, and Immunity", healthcare workers after this outbreak of novel virus are facing physical symptoms such as fever, nausea and vomiting, neck stiffness, poor appetite, lack of concentration, joint and muscles pain in mild to moderate zone [9]. Constant and prolonged usage of personal protective equipment causes skin irritation and impaired cutaneous integrity in health care workers [7]. Prolonged working hours and busy shifts make it difficult for nurses to take their relaxation or break times as needed by body. Nurses working in busy shifts end up with many health related issues like urinary retention, muscles fatigue and body aches. Physical well-being of an individual also depends on one's psychological satisfaction. Both physical and psychological health cannot be address

separately. They work as a parallel aspect of wellness. Study shows that physical occupational factors work as stress provoking elements and significantly cause sleep difficulties in healthcare staff [10]. Therefore, it is important to focus on psychological impact of COVID-19 in an equal manner.

Psychological Impact

Literature reveals that level of psychological effects such as post-traumatic stress syndrome; depression and anxiety are higher among nurses working in COVID-19 isolation ward as compared to physicians working in same vicinity [11]. Changes in nursing interventional techniques such as telephonic counselling, frequent end-of-life care, sudden and rapid deterioration of COVID-19 patients and behavioural pressure from family members of admitted patients are causing unexplainable psychological impact on nurses [12]. A qualitative research study proves, during initial stage nurses were facing negative effects of this outbreak. But after learning from life experiences and using of multiple coping strategies, nurses showed up with a positive image of resilience and competency [13].

Coping Strategies

Psychological reinforcement plays a vital role in fighting with increasing level of depression and anxiety. According World Health Organization report of hospital preparedness in epidemic, health care workers should be provided with psychological counselling in timely manner as they are more vulnerable to face conflict between their family circumstances and professional responsibilities [14]

Adequacy in personal protective equipment and training related to their usage provides health care workers an inner satisfaction of not being infected while caring for patients of corona virus [15]. Positive encouragement on frequent hand hygiene techniques and proper use of personal protective equipment can protect health care staff from multiple physical health impacts of corona virus [16].

Emotional support from family members and positive attitude among health care professionals towards each other motivates individual to work by heart without feeling any fears and dilemmas [17]. To decrease fatigue and increase level of productivity among medical and nursing staff working in stressful environment it is necessary to provide them a quality time to spend with their family members and friends [18].

Furthermore, experiential learning serves as a foundation of critical thinking in novice nurses by focusing on self-reflection. Experiencing medical dilemmas and scenarios at initial level of training can prepare nurses for more crucial time in future [19].

Healthy practices of voiding and proper fluid intake is very important for health care staff. Coping with the help of short breaks during work and healthy fluid managing techniques prevent staff members from multiple physical health issues such as urinary tract infections, dehydration and fluid retention [20].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reduction in burden on tertiary health care setting can be achieved, if cases of COVID-19 will not reach to the severe level. Early detection of cases through testing and screening on a community level will provide early initiation of treatment. Moreover, it will increase the level of satisfaction among population while having health check-ups by family physicians [21]. This review highlighted multiple physical and psychological impacts of corona virus outbreak. Almost all health care providers are performing their best to fight with this viral spread. Nurses working as front line workers are more vulnerable for mental and physical trauma as compare to other health care workers. With the presence of strategies on individual and organizational level more strategies on larger scale are significant in protection of health care workforce.

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