

## Sleep Disturbances in Era of COVID-19 Pandemic

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Coronavirus illness, also known as COVID-19, is an illness caused by a new coronavirus now referred to as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. The virus was first identified in an outbreak of respiratory cases in Wuhan City, China. Most of the people who initially suffered from the illness in Wuhan had visited the Huanan Seafood market and as a result, the virus is perceived to have a zoonotic cause [1]. Coronavirus was first reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019. WHO, then declared the coronavirus pandemic an international medical emergency on January 30th 2020. Currently, the total coronavirus cases are more than 11.6 million with 537,000 deaths and 6.27 million recoveries [2]. In the United States, there are more than 3 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 where 132,000+ victims have died from this virus while 901,000 others have fully recovered.

Insomnia has been prevalent among millions of people even before the spread of the COVID-19. Nonetheless, the virus pandemic has created various new challenges even for the individuals who initially had no sleep or anxiety issues [3]. The virus also affects the country's diverse population differently, but the front-line health professionals and the patients encounter the burden of the direct effects of the virus. According to information from fitness devices, individuals who are living under lockdown, and patients who have contracted the virus are getting up later [4]. Sleep disturbances due to COVID-19 are widespread among the population, which are mainly caused by extra intense nightmares and anxiety of probable cause. Patients of the coronavirus have been affected emotionally while non-affected patients are dealing with anxiety, feelings of hesitation, despair, and higher degrees of strain caused by the infection [4].

COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching effects on the society and economy. In the recent few months, experts have stressed that the coronavirus is more than a medical crisis since it has affected economies and societies at their core [2]. International travel has been very limited since the virus was declared a global crisis. In times of other disorders such as H1N1, Ebola virus, and Spanish flu, the COVID-19 has placed a heavy burden on the society, mainly due to the healthcare need and attention needed to be afforded to the patients. At its rapid spread, most nations across the world did not have enough medical facilities to provide enough care to the patients. As a result, in the case of other severe viruses and illnesses, and with the prevalence of the coronavirus, most societies across the world can hardly provide adequate medical care to the patients, which can ultimately result in more deaths.

Sleep disturbances have always been a struggle for many; however, these conditions have exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has greatly affected the emotional health of patients as well as non-infected individuals as they are dealing with fear, higher levels of stress and anxiety, depression and feelings of uncertainty. Furthermore, individuals are unable to get restful sleep due to the stress and anxiety that the coronavirus disease brings. For those who already experience sleep disturbances, there is a high possibility that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly worsened the problem [5]. Even those who generally considered themselves "good sleepers" have reported poor quality of sleep. Based on a survey that has been conducted, individuals' answers indicate that they are unable to fall asleep even if they feel tired after a long day and are unable to stay asleep for the entirety of the night [5]. Many even claimed that their high anxiety and stress lev-

els have caused them to experience chronic, recurring nightmares some of which are disturbing [3]. Perhaps, these sleep disturbances during COVID-19 are due to people's fear about this new disease. Anyone from young kids to senior citizens experiences these psychological impacts with no age discrimination [6]. However, individuals who are the main income earner of their household, and people who are facing or have faced mental illness are at most risk for these mental health issues [6]. Additionally, staying at home for extended periods can be very overwhelming and can cause one to feel bored, lonely and worried about the physical and emotional health of themselves and others. Adults who are currently unemployed are extremely concerned about their financial well-being as a result of the economic crash down, and some are unable to pay for rent and afford necessities for the family. According to CNBC, the coronavirus pandemic is responsible for causing almost 9 in 10 Americans to feel stressed about their finances and more than 40% of Americans are concerned about not having enough money amidst the pandemic [7]. Additionally, staying at home for such long periods can be very overwhelming and can cause one to feel bored, lonely, and worried about the physical and emotional health of themselves and others. Constant worrying can cause unhealthy stress, which leads to sleep deprivation and the disruption of normal sleep patterns [8]. Stress may also cause one to suffer from hypervigilance, a heightened state of alertness, and delay one's shift from wakefulness to sleep. Besides, a lack of proper sleep triggers more stress, which leads to what feels like a never-ending cycle of stress/anxiety, tension, and sleeplessness (Figure 1). It has been proven by research that stress levels and sleep have a bidirectional correlation meaning "sleep disruption can reduce stress tolerance and stress may disrupt sleep" [9]. Coronavirus patients and non-infected people are not the only ones facing stress/anxiety and sleep disturbances; the healthcare providers are also experiencing a similar difficulty [3]. The frontline workers who are working in full force at this time are worried about contracting this dangerous virus and potentially infecting their loved ones at home. Each day, healthcare providers work extremely long hours and face uncertain situations, and this has caused a major spike in their anxiety and stress levels. For many physicians across the United States, the current epicenter of the virus, this has been the greatest level of stress they have ever experienced in their professional lives. "I haven't slept for longer than three hours in the past two weeks", Stephen Anderson, an ED physician at MultiCare Auburn Medical Center outside Seattle, said. Around the country, physicians

like Anderson are working to fight the coronavirus pandemic and then has to fight sleep disorders like insomnia which are preventing them from getting rest [10]. During these times of uncertainty, getting a night of good sleep is very important because it helps to boost immune system and encourages physical and psychological well-being. Although people are gradually learning to adapt to these stressful times, everyone must take all the steps possible to ensure that they are managing their sleep. To begin, you must regularize your circadian rhythm as it is the key to better sleep. Some ways you can do this is by going to sleep and waking up at the same time each day, practicing meditation or progressive relaxation techniques, lowering your intake of caffeine and alcohol, and staying physically active.

In conclusion, Coronavirus pandemic has had far-reaching social and economic consequences. Patients of the COVID-19 have been immensely affected emotionally while non-patients are dealing with anxiety, sensations of uncertainty, depression, and higher degrees of stress. Also, both patients and non-patients of the Coronavirus are dealing with sleep disturbances because of the anxiety and stress that the pandemic brings. The community, both medical and non-medical, local to global, supporting each other may help to ease the anxiety and stress the COVID-19 brings.

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