



COVID-19 and the Mental Health Dilemma: How Mental Health Influences the Population during the Pandemic

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Abstract

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has plagued the world in an unprecedented pandemic and has resulted in innumerable complications. The influence of mental illness on the public is an adverse side effect to the aftermath of this disease. Additionally, mental illness may worsen in the patients with COVID-19 who have been previously diagnosed with mental illness. In this article, we discussed neuropsychiatric syndromes in the general population during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19; SARS-CoV-2; Mental Health; Psychiatric

Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), has blown to the proportion of a global pandemic originating from Wuhan, China. From bat-to-human to human-to-human spread, this disease has been spread worldwide through substandard control, imperfect travel restriction, and mutation of the virus, which allowed for an adroitness of transmissibility [1]. Not only respiratory systems, but COVID-19 can also affect gastrointestinal, cardiac, renal, and neurological systems [2]. Mental illness is also noted to be directly and indirectly impacted by COVID-19.

Mental health issues

Mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia are common among the general population with a global prevalence of 22% [3]. The true dilemma is how these symptoms have augmented in size during the pandemic. It was documented that psychological distress in the United States in April 2020 presented in 14% of the population while in 2018, long before the SARS-CoV-2, the prevalence was 4% of the population [4]. Two studies

from China confirm this increment of moderate-severe depression which was appearing in 9 percent of the population in January of 2020, then increasing to 17% in February of 2020 [5,6]. There is, additionally, a disproportion in ethnic populations regarding mental health. Non-Hispanic African American adults and Hispanic or Latino adults are more likely to report symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorder than Non-Hispanic White adults during this pandemic [7]. More African American than White parents has reported a strain on their children's mental health, though these communities of color have historically received less behavioral health services than general populations [7]. Along with the prior conversation, gender also plays a significant role in mental health. Women with low income were found to have a higher chance of mental health [8]. According to a study on the impact of mental health on students in the United States, female students appear to have higher rates of depression, anxiety, and stress than male students during the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic. The study further concluded that high school students were under greater stress and had greater anxiety than college students during the pandemic. Not only high risk for COVID-19 infection but the elderly are also at risk for anxiety and depression [9].

COVID-19 related mental health issues

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a worldwide quarantine was issued to keep the virus at bay. Because of this quarantine, mental health challenges have risen on account of feelings of irritability, insomnia, fear, confusion, anger, frustration, and boredom. These feelings can accelerate to depression, anxiety, insomnia, substance use, and domestic violence owing to the psychological response of a prolonged experience of detainment [10]. Conversely, those who undergo death or infection in the family may be susceptible to an advanced denomination of mental illness that is concerned with grief, loss, disbelief, confusion, and even survivor's guilt. This consideration can transform into prolonged grief, large-scale depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

As mental health care becomes increasingly unavailable due to the circumstances of the pandemic, grief is left to foster and the disorders that stem from it are generally untreated. Social distancing practices, isolation further fan the flames of grief, encourages the feeling to be bottled and suppressed. Moreover, the social disruption is adversely affecting those with pre-existing psychiatric issues, which are left to mature [11]. Patients with pre-existing psychiatric illnesses, cognitive deficits, disorganized thinking and behavior, poor insight, or marginalized social status, may have trouble complying with guidelines. COVID-19 may affect the central nervous system directly, as there is evidence of neuropsychiatric alterations like cerebrovascular events, acute alterations in behavior, cognition, consciousness, personality, and neurologic problems in infected patients [8].

Several methods have been implemented to prevent and alleviate mental health issues related to COVID-19. Firstly, bereavement care needs to be organized in a public health/community setting to facilitate the treatment. PTSD Checklist, the Patient Health Questionnaire 9, and the Prolonged Grief 12 questionnaire would be greatly beneficial to identify a mental health anomaly before it worsens. Moreover, the population must be aware of the pertinence of mental health as well as implementing funding for mental health. One of the most important preventions and therapy are conversation and support from a family member and loved ones can be administered through online method. The support extends to the use of tele-psychotherapy as physical distancing is needed

during this time. Financial support preparation from the government of each country is essential to reduce financial stress during this pandemic [9].

Conclusion

The mental health system is currently constrained because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, various methods can remedy this dilemma such as raising awareness of mental health and psychotherapy via the use of technologies. Generalizing accessible social-distancing platforms for communications and supports during a pandemic will provide mental health illness prevention and treatment.

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