COVID-19: impact on mental health

 12th February 2021

**Title:** Supporting the mental health of NHS staff

British Medical Association | MIND | 4th February 2021

NHS managers are to be helped to support the mental health of their employees with a guidebook by the charity MIND. The guide, funded by the BMA, comes as the NHS workforce continues to battle COVID-19 – its greatest challenge to date, it says.

It aims to provide practical advice and tips to help NHS leaders, and line managers, reduce mental health stigma, create mentally heathy cultures and support better mental health. It also provides information about the role of champions and peer supporters, given the high level of informal support given by peers across the NHS to support the mental health and wellbeing of their colleagues.

This guidance finds that the biggest obstacles to staff accessing support is the stigma associated with mental health and lack of senior leadership in creating cultures where mental health and wellbeing is prioritised and talked about openly.

These barriers are not unique to Covid-19, they have existed in the NHS for a long time. And whilst providing individuals with information about self-care, support for their mental health and access to effective interventions is essential, this can only be done alongside tackling the work-related causes of poor mental health within the NHS workforce if true systemic change can take place.

Full guidebook: [Supporting the mental health of NHS staff. The role of NHS leaders in reducing mental health stigma and creating mentally healthy cultures](https://cdn.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/02114357/BMA-Stigma-Resource-.pdf)

See also: [MIND offers NHS managers mental health guide](https://www.bma.org.uk/news-and-opinion/mind-offers-nhs-managers-mental-health-guide)

**Title:** COVID-19: a heavy toll on health-care workers

The Lancet Respiratory Medicine | 8th February 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged and, in many cases, exceeded the capacity of hospitals and intensive care units (ICUs) worldwide. Health-care workers have continued to provide care for patients despite exhaustion, personal risk of infection, fear of transmission to family members, illness or death of friends and colleagues, and the loss of many patients.

 Sadly, health-care workers have also faced many additional—often avoidable—sources of stress and anxiety, and long shifts combined with unprecedented population restrictions, including personal isolation, have affected individuals' ability to cope.

This Comment piece suggests that to effectively support health-care workers—the greatest assets of our health-care systems—we must understand their challenges and needs. By acknowledging the commonality of psychological distress related to caring for patients with COVID-19, we can destigmatise work-related mental health issues and appropriately attend to the mental health needs of all health-care workers affected by the pandemic.

Full detail: [COVID-19: a heavy toll on health-care workers](https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2213-2600%2821%2900068-0)

**Title:** Mental health and wellbeing for people receiving persistently lower pay during the pandemic

The Health Foundation | 3rd February 2021

The national lockdown means that some sectors remain closed, with workers furloughed for weeks or months. We will have seen an unprecedented period of people receiving less or no work with potentially long-lasting effects on their health and wellbeing.

This article explores the consequences for the mental health and wellbeing of people who received lower pay during the period from March to September 2020 than they were receiving before the first lockdown. The analysis is based on an online survey of more than 6,000 adults aged 18–65 who were interviewed in the period 17–22 September 2020 (our methods are summarised in the box at the bottom of the page).

Overall, this survey estimates that compared to immediately before the pandemic, 13% of the working age population saw a reduction in their pay across every subsequent month up to September 2020. Of those who experienced this persistent decrease in pay, 21% have been furloughed, 23% have lost hours and a further 23% have lost their job.

The analysis also found that:

* people with persistently low pay were more than twice as likely to report very low satisfaction, very low happiness and feeling worthless than those with no pay loss
* lower pay hit lower income households harder
* age matters - the youngest and oldest groups were significantly more likely than all other age groups to have persistently a lower pay.

The article concludes that people’s health and their financial circumstances are inextricably linked and trends to date suggest that people experiencing a prolonged economic decline are more likely to have poorer mental health and wellbeing. The unique societal shock caused by the pandemic means that measures for the post-pandemic recovery must focus as much on restoring mental health as restoring the economy.

Full detail: [Mental health and wellbeing for people receiving persistently lower pay during the pandemic](https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/blogs/mental-health-and-wellbeing-for-people-receiving-persistently-lower-pay?utm_campaign=12132605_Mental%20health%20and%20lower%20pay%20%20%20WARM%20%20January%202021&utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Health%20Foundation&dm_i=4Y2,781KT,6ZKZT4,T9SRC,1)

**Title:** How has coronavirus affected mental health?

BBC News | 11th February 2021

The coronavirus pandemic has led to concerns about a worsening of mental health across the UK. This BBC explainer looks at the scale of the problem, asking:

* How has mental health changed?
* What issues are impacting our mental health?
* Are people still getting help?
* How quickly are people getting help?

Full detail: [How has coronavirus affected mental health?](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-55957105)

**Title:** Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 12 February 2021

Office for National Statistics | 12th February 2021

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey covering the period 3 to 7 February 2021 to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

This week, over the period 3 to 7 February 2021, based on adults in Great Britain, personal well-being scores for life satisfaction, feeling that things done in life are worthwhile and happiness remained at some of the lowest levels recorded since this survey began in March 2020; the anxiety score improved slightly this week compared with last week.

Full detail: [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 12 February 2021](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/12february2021)

**Title:** Doctors warn of ‘tsunami’ of pandemic eating disorders

The Guardian | 11th February 2021

Psychiatrists have warned of a “tsunami” of eating disorder patients amid data showing soaring numbers of people experiencing anorexia and bulimia in England during the pandemic.

Dr Agnes Ayton, the chair of the Eating Disorder Faculty at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said the number of people experiencing problems had risen sharply with conditions such as anorexia thriving in the isolation of lockdown. She said: “We expect the tsunami [of patients] is still coming. We don’t think it has been and gone.”

She also noted that in Oxford, where she works, about 20% of people admitted were usually urgent referrals but this proportion had shot up to 80%.

Separately, data released on Thursday shows huge rises in waiting times for young people and children, with a 128% increase in the number waiting for routine treatment compared with last year.

Full detail: [Doctors warn of ‘tsunami’ of pandemic eating disorders](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/feb/11/doctors-warn-of-tsunami-of-pandemic-eating-disorders)

**Title:** Home confinement during the COVID-19: day-to-day associations of sleep quality with rumination, psychotic-like experiences, and somatic symptoms

Sleep | 10th February 2021

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, populations from many countries have been confined at home for extended periods of time in stressful environmental and media conditions. Cross-sectional studies already evidence deleterious psychological consequences, with poor sleep as a risk factor for impaired mental health.

In this prospective study conducted across three European countries, the authors queried participants (N = 166) twice a day through an online interface about their sleep quality and their negative psychological experiences for two consecutive weeks.

Focus was set on between-and within-person associations of subjective sleep quality with daytime experiences such as rumination, psychotic-like experiences, and somatic complaints about the typical symptoms of the coronavirus.

Results show that daily reports of country-specific COVID-19 deaths predicted increased negative mood, psychotic-like experiences and somatic complaints during the same day, and decreased subjective sleep quality the following night. Disrupted sleep was globally associated with negative psychological outcomes during the study period, and a relatively poorer night of sleep predicted increased rumination, psychotic-like experiences, and somatic complaints the following day.

This temporal association was not paralleled by daytime mental complaints predicting relatively poorer sleep quality on the following night. Our findings show that night-to-night changes in sleep quality predict how individuals cope the next day with daily challenges induced by home confinement.

Full article: [Home confinement during the COVID-19: day-to-day associations of sleep quality with rumination, psychotic-like experiences, and somatic symptoms](https://watermark.silverchair.com/zsab029.pdf?token=AQECAHi208BE49Ooan9kkhW_Ercy7Dm3ZL_9Cf3qfKAc485ysgAAArwwggK4BgkqhkiG9w0BBwagggKpMIICpQIBADCCAp4GCSqGSIb3DQEHATAeBglghkgBZQMEAS4wEQQMLZjPaRXZbgNvVff2AgEQgIICb4VwC4y7YX17GrUJEV6rGgn8kRBf_fteDU1XQCqqBlMNxw0XowtJ6WwqvlQKoj1m2BJZ-vP3LL3fODltFMAGjG8KnLLYMjXemlBxq9RKcBMniRZO9O7-QRoXCLjEVPLdplzNwHMY_p7wHXljIHdWdrKMx04YEQ5Cx527Th_wTsGdrR0BTv9kiz_lcBtc7I-eOnOytQqfmvblP9y4SxII3er9EGgp6dt-HP8JfRw0HohIsYAzYVk5lRWU7-D_Gt04VrZscs5v0UCsLgbj54S6uANh1LBRT1u-GiM18jxCjmvEizuHeQi0_CIgMTYdwy1doeO6AB22oHLR76nPPTLYDiHYH1vxWeEE2hjJuDkSrJukauJQ1BOXra46ngpPSzmDDoi1E2PyJKABljUM_YPKeUf_HBBG-3pJRWONO0IinINsAijBcwCYpC2RHkkvvQ87WFoIEjUle8JtNac-NTmtoEIhiFLr4IwaILwAQzlguhE5wMzchLfiyYo7F2DcN1s6bglaCgMQqMqdWRF0fXzLbrWE9hZty-cM-XAwXnNVZAtdsRZb0c16KWOwhMu2RsI3SkeMDmmntTDC7g81gPNqFkQHdbegLZVDEfk1j7gPnXcMQKT0_oxFdGt009oLpcBNbQxQxhDvz02FoZ4P_tz2r4kMHRDVMW_9DLnYIEWPldIzHOP_pgzBrOGwFETBT_NVgnPklBo1Xfse2DUFyrf1svNsovQKkSWGgnzgqyUj_ffxXTmR1EDkpEZRPRebkEKl4R0RAWKbj-0n48syyE1ff9JRRLLR_A4nPHra9VcUwiitfM4ky1v2wsnGIYXEJ_SU)

**Title:** Treating Social Anxiety in an Era of Social Distancing: Adapting Exposure Therapy for Youth During COVID-19

Cognitive and Behavioral Practice | 5th February 2021

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has caused widespread disruption to our traditional way of life and mental health therapy has not been spared. A combination of increased anxiety, diminished social opportunities, and the shift to telehealth service provision presents particular challenges for the treatment of social anxiety in youth, which relies heavily on exposures to social situations with peers, adults, or other feared social stimuli.

The objective of this commentary is to provide guidance to clinicians working with youth with social anxiety on how to maintain ethical, evidence-informed provision of exposure therapy in light of these unusual circumstances.

The authors first present an overview of how COVID-19 may uniquely impact youth with social anxiety and highlight the importance of continuing to provide exposure-based treatments during this time. The paper then discusses guiding principles for delivering exposure therapy during COVID-19.

The paper focusses on providing practical examples of how common social anxiety exposures can be adapted and delivered successfully through telehealth while abiding by COVID-19 social distancing guidelines. Finally, key recommendations to assist clinicians in moving treatment forward while considering changing safety guidelines pertaining to COVID-19 are discussed.

Full article: [Treating social anxiety in an era of social distancing: Adapting exposure therapy for youth during Covid-19](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7862041/pdf/main.pdf)

**Title:** Coronavirus Disease 2019 Immediately Increases Burnout Symptoms in ICU Professionals: A Longitudinal Cohort Study

Critical Care Medicine | January 28th 2021

ICU professionals are at risk of developing burnout due to coronavirus disease 2019. This study assesses the prevalence and incidence of burnout symptoms and moral distress in ICU professionals before and during the coronavirus disease 2019 crisis.

The study found that the prevalence of burnout symptoms was 23.0% before coronavirus disease 2019 and 36.1% at postpeak time, with higher rates in nurses (38.0%) than in physicians (28.6%). Reversely, the incidence rate of new burnout cases among physicians was higher (26.7%) than nurses (21.9%).

Higher prevalence of burnout symptoms was observed in the postpeak coronavirus disease 2019 period for nurses, for professionals working overtime, and for professionals directly engaged with care for coronavirus disease 2019 patients. Physicians were more likely than nurses to develop burnout symptoms due to coronavirus disease 2019.

This study shows that overburdening of ICU professionals during an extended period of time leads to symptoms of burnout. Working long hours and under conditions of scarcity of staff, time, and resources comes at the price of ICU professionals' mental health.

Full article: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 immediately increases burnout symptoms in ICU professionals: A Longitudinal Cohort Study](https://journals.lww.com/ccmjournal/Abstract/9000/Coronavirus_Disease_2019_Immediately_Increases.95369.aspx)

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