COVID-19: impact on mental health

 6th November 2020

**Title:** Paramedics in pandemics: protecting the mental wellness of those behind enemy lines

The British Journal of Psychiatry | 23rd October 2020

Besides a global health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has potential to have a severe and long-lasting psychological impact on frontline healthcare workers such as paramedics. It is imperative to shed light on these mental health issues and employ interventions to protect the mental wellness of this vulnerable group of healthcare workers.

Full document: [Paramedics in pandemics: protecting the mental wellness of those behind enemy lines](https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/C0B1C08CF27CF1AD95EAC18B43D35E21/S0007125020001932a.pdf/paramedics_in_pandemics_protecting_the_mental_wellness_of_those_behind_enemy_lines.pdf)

**Title**: Harms of public health interventions against covid-19 must not be ignored

BMJ | 2020; 371: m4074 | 2nd November 2020

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has posed an unprecedented challenge for governments. Questions regarding the most effective interventions to reduce the spread of the virus—for example, more testing, requirements to wear face masks, and stricter and longer lockdowns—become widely discussed in the popular and scientific press, informed largely by models that aimed to predict the health benefits of proposed interventions. Central to all these studies is recognition that inaction, or delayed action, will put millions of people unnecessarily at risk of serious illness or death.

However, interventions to limit the spread of the coronavirus also carry negative health effects, which have yet to be considered systematically. Despite increasing evidence on the unintended, adverse effects of public health interventions such as social distancing and lockdown measures, there are few signs that policy decisions are being informed by a serious assessment and weighing of their harms on health.

The harmful consequences of public health choices should be explicitly considered and transparently reported to limit their damage, says this BMJ analysis.

Full detail: [Harms of public health interventions against covid-19 must not be ignored](https://www.bmj.com/content/371/bmj.m4074)

**Title:** Interventions to support the resilience and mental health of frontline health and social care professionals during and after a disease outbreak, epidemic or pandemic

Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews | 5th November 2020

Evidence from disease epidemics shows that healthcare workers are at risk of developing short‐ and long‐term mental health problems. The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned about the potential negative impact of the COVID‐19 crisis on the mental well‐being of health and social care professionals. Symptoms of mental health problems commonly include depression, anxiety, stress, and additional cognitive and social problems; these can impact on function in the workplace.

The mental health and resilience (ability to cope with the negative effects of stress) of frontline health and social care professionals ('frontline workers' in this review) could be supported during disease epidemics by workplace interventions, interventions to support basic daily needs, psychological support interventions, pharmacological interventions, or a combination of any or all of these.

This review found a lack of research evidence relating to the effectiveness of interventions to support the resilience and mental health of frontline workers during disease epidemics or pandemics. Given the ongoing COVID‐19 pandemic and the recognised negative impact on frontline workers, research to determine the effectiveness of interventions to support the resilience and mental health of frontline health and social care workers during disease epidemics or pandemics is a high priority.

Full detail: [Interventions to support the resilience and mental health of frontline health and social care professionals during and after a disease outbreak, epidemic or pandemic](https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD013779/full#CD013779-abs-0002)

**TITLE**: MENTAL CAPACITY ACT (MCA) AND THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Social Care Institute for Excellence | [updated 2nd November 2020]

Those most at risk from COVID-19 – older people, and people with existing long-term health conditions – are likely to be over-represented in the group of people whose rights and freedoms are protected by the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005.

This quick guide describes the protections the MCA gives them, both during the crisis and in more typical times.

Full detail: [Mental Capacity Act (MCA) and the COVID-19 crisis](https://www.scie.org.uk/care-providers/coronavirus-covid-19/mca)

**Title:** Drinking to cope with the pandemic: The unique associations of COVID-19-related perceived threat and psychological distress to drinking behaviors in American men and women

Addictive Behaviors | Volume 110, November 2020

The 2019 Coronavirus pandemic has brought about significant and unprecedented changes to the modern world, including stay-at-home orders, high rates of unemployment, and more than a hundred thousand deaths across the United States.

Derived from the self-medication hypothesis, this research explored how perceived threat and psychological distress related to the COVID-19 pandemic are associated with drinking behavior among an American sample of adults. The authors also evaluated whether links between COVID-19-related perceived threat and psychological distress with drinking behavior are different for men and women.

The study found that COVID-19 psychological distress was consistently related to alcohol use indices.

Further detail: [Drinking to cope with the pandemic: The unique associations of COVID-19-related perceived threat and psychological distress to drinking behaviors in American men and women](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0306460320306626)

**TITLE:** MATERNAL PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE USE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Journal of Affective Disorders | Volume 276, 1 November 2020, p765-774

Mental health problems are increasingly recognized as a significant and concerning secondary effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Research on previous epidemics/pandemics suggest that families, particularly mothers, may be at increased risk, but this population has yet to be examined. The current study:

(1) described prevalence rates of maternal depressive and anxiety symptoms from an online convenience sample during the COVID-19 pandemic

(2) identified risk and protective factors for elevated symptoms, and

(3) described current mental health service use and barriers.

The study concludes that maternal depression and anxiety appear to be elevated in the context of COVID-19 compared to previously reported population norms.

Full article: [Maternal psychological distress & mental health service use during the COVID-19 pandemic](https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S016503272032526X?token=4F2B1A750F4F9A73D61D643A8AD05D5881883FBEFFEF79A91C50E94E8C95DA6DD3EC078D4740E8528548106EEED761ED)

**TITLE:** THE ENEMY WHO SEALED THE WORLD: EFFECTS QUARANTINE DUE TO THE COVID-19 ON SLEEP QUALITY, ANXIETY, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS IN THE ITALIAN POPULATION

Sleep Medicine | Volume 75, November 2020, p. 12-20

The 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic has become a global health emergency. The extreme actions aimed to reduce virus diffusion have profoundly changed the lifestyles of the Italian population. Moreover, fear of contracting the infection has generated high levels of anxiety.

This study aimed to understand the psychological impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on sleep quality, general anxiety symptomatology, and psychological distress.

The study found that:

* The COVID-19 pandemic is a risk factor for sleep disorders and psychological diseases.
* Low sleep quality, anxiety, and distress are associated with COVID-19-related PTSD.
* Youth and women have a greater risk of developing COVID-19-related sleep disorders and distress.

Full article: [The enemy who sealed the world: effects quarantine due to the COVID-19 on sleep quality, anxiety, and psychological distress in the Italian population](https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S1389945720302136?token=559397AC08184C0886A4D0B815033EC3D1A7774CA2E37F259447C56BD5E67CF39EF32638F68FAED8AD17CCAADEAA368D)

**Title:** Reporting on suicidal behaviour and COVID-19—need for caution

The Lancet Psychiatry | 5th November 2020

News reporting on suicidal behaviour can have a considerable influence on suicide and self-harm in the general population.

This issue is particularly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic. With a rising number of deaths from COVID-19 infection and negative effects of the pandemic on key factors that are associated with suicide, including social isolation, unemployment, and financial problems, there is understandable concern that suicide rates might increase.  Importantly, this correspondence states that news reporting should not add to the potential risks of suicide.

Full detail: [Reporting on suicidal behaviour and COVID-19—need for caution](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366%2820%2930484-3/fulltext)

**Title:** Growing up in the shadow of COVID-19

The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health | 5th November 2020

This editorial suggests that 8 months into the pandemic, the UK Government's inadequate consideration of young people in the COVID-19 response is causing lasting harm to a whole generation. Although children and adolescents are generally less clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 than are adults, this editorial looks at how the wider effects of COVID-19 policies have disproportionately and negatively affected the young.

Full editorial: [Growing up in the shadow of COVID-19](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642%2820%2930349-7/fulltext#coronavirus-linkback-header)

Related: [An intergenerational audit for the UK](https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2020/10/Intergenerational-audit-2020.pdf) | Resolution Foundation | October 2020

**Title**: How has Covid-19 and the associated lockdown measures affected mental health and wellbeing in the UK?

What Works Centre for Wellbeing | 5th November 2020

This briefing provides insights into how mental health conditions have changed and what the risk factors are that need to be recognised when supporting people’s mental health.

Full briefing: [How has Covid-19 and the associated lockdown measures affected mental health and wellbeing in the UK?](https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Covid-Mental-health-briefing-Nov-2020.pdf)

See also: [Mental health and Covid-19](https://whatworkswellbeing.org/blog/mental-health-and-covid-19/) | What Works Wellbeing blog post

We

[TRFT Library & Knowledge Service](https://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/) aim to bring together the latest guidelines, research and news on Covid-19 through our [Covid-19 portal](https://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/coronavirus.html). For daily updates on Covid-19 visit our '[Latest Health](https://trfthealthweeklydigest.wordpress.com/)' newsfeed, or use the hashtag [#covid19rftlks](https://twitter.com/hashtag/covid19rftlks?src=hashtag_click) to see our latest tweets on Covid-19 research, guidelines and news.

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