COVID-19: impact on mental health

 11th June 2021

**Title:** Managing COVID-19-related mental ill health in primary care

Guidelines in Practice | 28th May 2021

This article looks at mental health during the pandemic in the primary care setting, with a particular focus on the effect of COVID-19 on the experience and management of mental ill health. The article looks at:

* the balance of positive and negative factors that contributes to mental wellbeing
* the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions on mental health
* assessing and managing mental ill health in the context of COVID-19.

Full detail: [Managing COVID-19-related mental ill health in primary care](https://www.guidelinesinpractice.co.uk/mental-health/managing-covid-19-related-mental-ill-health-in-primary-care/455995.article?utm_source=MGP%20Ltd&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=12430120_20210605%20GinP%20highlights&dm_i=HEZ,7EF54,W84HTI,U1TDN,1)

**Title:** Neurology and neuropsychiatry of COVID-19: a systematic review and meta-analysis of the early literature reveals frequent CNS manifestations and key emerging narratives

Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery & Psychiatry | 3rd June 2021

There is accumulating evidence of the neurological and neuropsychiatric features of infection with SARS-CoV-2. This systematic review and meta-analysis aimed to describe the characteristics of the early literature and estimate point prevalences for neurological and neuropsychiatric manifestations.

The review found neurological and neuropsychiatric symptoms of COVID-19 in the pandemic’s early phase are varied and common. The researchers found high numbers of patients reporting symptoms of mental health issues like depression (23%) and anxiety (16%).

Neurological symptoms were also commonplace, with the most frequently reported symptoms being a loss of smell (43%), weakness (40%), fatigue (38%), a loss of taste (37%), muscle pain (25%) and headache (21%).

While the majority of studies included in the review focused on severe cases, primarily where people had been admitted to hospital, the researchers surprisingly found similarly high levels of neurological and psychiatric symptoms in those with less severe illness.

Full paper: [Neurology and neuropsychiatry of COVID-19: a systematic review and meta-analysis of the early literature reveals frequent CNS manifestations and key emerging narratives](https://jnnp.bmj.com/content/jnnp/early/2021/06/03/jnnp-2021-326405.full.pdf)

**Title:** NHS ahead of target in recovery of elective care, and mental health services back to pre-pandemic levels

NHS England | 10th June 2021

Operations and other routine care are ahead of ambitions set out in April with mental health services back at pre-pandemic levels, NHS figures show. The number of people waiting over 52 weeks to begin treatment dropped by more than 50,000 in April, while by May, operations and other elective activity had already climbed to 90% of pre-pandemic levels.

Services disrupted during the pandemic have continued to recover, with 1.1 million people beginning treatment and 1.8 million diagnostic tests taking place in April. Cancer services have continued to rebound strongly, with more than 200,000 people referred for cancer checks in April following a record high the month before.

The NHS also faced one of its busiest months on record in terms of emergency care in May, with staff responding to more than 800,000 incidents – an increase of over 70,000 from two years previously.

Important steps have been made in restoring mental health services to pre-COVID-19 levels and there has been an increase in the number of patients referred for talking therapies for common disorders such as depression and anxiety. Newly published data on mental health services show that Improving Access to Psychological Therapies referrals significantly increased to 159,140 in March 2021, a rise from 133,365 in February and from 108,330 the year before.

Full detail: [NHS ahead of target in recovery of elective care, and mental health services back to pre-pandemic levels](https://www.england.nhs.uk/2021/06/nhs-ahead-of-target-in-recovery-of-elective-care-and-mental-health-services-back-to-pre-pandemic-levels/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+NHSCBoard+%28NHS+England%29)

**Title:** Improving mental health care key to COVID-19 pandemic recovery

OECD | 8th June 2021

The long-lasting COVID-19 crisis and the toll it is taking on mental health has made mental health systems more important than ever. This report provides an in-depth analysis of how well countries are delivering the policies and services that matter for mental health system performance.

The report highlights recent reforms countries have taken to strengthen mental health performance, including by increasing access to mental health care, ensuring that service users take the lead in planning and even delivering services, and prioritising integration and mental health promotion. The report also identifies promising approaches countries should pursue to better meet their populations’ mental health needs. This report sets up a framework for understanding mental health performance through internationally comparable indicators

Full detail: [A New Benchmark for Mental Health Systems. Tackling the Social and Economic Costs of Mental Ill-Health](https://read.oecd.org/10.1787/4ed890f6-en?format=html)

Press release: [Improving mental health care key to COVID-19 pandemic recovery](https://www.oecd.org/health/improving-mental-health-care-key-to-covid-19-pandemic-recovery.htm)

**Title:** Trajectories of depression and anxiety symptoms during the COVID-19 pandemic in a representative Australian adult cohort

Medical Journal of Australia | June 2021

The objective of this study was to estimate initial levels of symptoms of depression and anxiety, and their changes during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia; to identify trajectories of symptoms of depression and anxiety; to identify factors associated with these trajectories.

The longitudinal data enabled identification of distinct symptom trajectories during the first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia. The authors found that exposure to COVID- 19 itself did not harm mental health, but COVID- 19- related financial distress and social impairment were associated with higher symptom levels of depression or anxiety throughout the first three months of the pandemic. Early intervention to ensure that vulnerable people are clinically and socially supported during a pandemic should be a priority.

Full article: [Trajectories of depression and anxiety symptoms during the COVID-19 pandemic in a representative Australian adult cohort](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.5694/mja2.51043)

Related editorial: [Symptoms of depression and anxiety during the COVID‐19 pandemic: implications for mental health](https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2021/214/10/symptoms-depression-and-anxiety-during-covid-19-pandemic-implications-mental#8)

**Title:** The relationship between fear of COVID-19 and health anxiety among families with COVID-19 infected: The mediating role of metacognitions, intolerance of uncertainty, and emotion regulation

Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy | 10th June 2021

This study aimed to investigate the mediating role of metacognitions, intolerance of uncertainty, and emotion regulation in the relationship between fear of COVID-19 (FC-19) and health anxiety, among families with COVID-19 infected.

Participants were 541 individuals from family members of patients with COVID-19. Data were collected with a packet including socio-demographic and risk factors, the Fear of COVID-19 Scale, the Short Health Anxiety Inventory, the Metacognitions Questionnaire-30, the Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale-12, and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire.

Structural equation modeling analyses revealed a full mediation of metacognitions (i.e., positive beliefs about worry, negative beliefs about thoughts concerning uncontrollability and danger, cognitive confidence, and beliefs about the need to control thoughts), intolerance of uncertainty, and expressive suppression in the relation between FC-19 and health anxiety.

Moreover, the strongest indirect links were found between FC-19 and health anxiety through negative beliefs about thoughts concerning uncontrollability and danger and intolerance of uncertainty. These associations were independent of gender and risk status. The final model accounted for 71% of the variance of health anxiety.

These findings suggest that particularly metacognitions, intolerance of uncertainty and expressive suppression play a full mediational role in the relation between FC-19 and health anxiety.

Full paper: [The relationship between fear of COVID-19 and health anxiety among families with COVID-19 infected: The mediating role of metacognitions, intolerance of uncertainty, and emotion regulation](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/cpp.2628)

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