COVID-19: impact on mental health

30th April 2021

**Title:** Mental health patients ‘missed out on care’ during Covid

The Guardian | 25th April 2021

Mental health patients found their conditions deteriorated during the pandemic because the NHS switched from in-person help to support by telephone, video and text messages, new research reveals.

Many reported a lower quality of care, according to a study by University College London; others had trouble accessing medication, had appointments cancelled or felt the loss of face-to-face help meant they “were missing out on care”.

Researchers led by Dr Brynmor Lloyd-Evans found that, for many patients, the switch to remote care heightened the isolation and loneliness they were already feeling because they could no longer see friends and family.

Full detail: [Mental health patients ‘missed out on care’ during Covid](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/apr/25/mental-health-patients-missed-out-on-care-during-covid)

Full research: [Experiences of living with mental health problems during the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK: a coproduced, participatory qualitative interview study](https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s00127-021-02051-7.pdf) | Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology

**Title:** Experiences and emotional strain of NHS frontline workers during the peak of the COVID19 pandemic

International Journal of Social Psychiatry | 13th April 2021

The mental health of the population has been negatively affected due to the pandemic. Frontline healthcare workers with increased exposure to COVID diagnosis, treatment and care were especially likely to report psychological burden, fear, anxiety and depression.

The aim of this paper was to elicit how working as a health professional during the pandemic is impacting on the psychological wellbeing of frontline staff.

Survey collected data from 395 NHS staff was developed into three themes; (1) Despair and uncertainty: feeling overwhelmed trying to protect everyone, (2) Behavioural and psychological impact: affecting wellbeing and functioning and (3) Coping and employer support: getting the right help. NHS staff felt enormous burden to adequately complete their professional, personal and civil responsibility to keep everyone safe leading to negative psychological and behavioural consequences and desire for NHS employers to offer better support.

As the pandemic progresses, the results of this study may inform NHS employers on how optimum support can be offered to help them cope with negative psychological consequences of the pandemic.

Full article: [Experiences and emotional strain of NHS frontline workers during the peak of the COVID19 pandemic](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/00207640211006153)

**Title:** Patients at high risk of suicide before and during a COVID-19 lockdown: ecological momentary assessment study

Bjpsych Open | 16th April 2021

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak may have affected the mental health of patients at high risk of suicide. In this study the authors explored the wish to die and other suicide risk factors using smartphone-based ecological momentary assessment (EMA) in patients with a history of suicidal thoughts and behaviour.

Contrary to their expectations the researchers found a decrease in the wish to die during lockdown. This is consistent with previous studies showing that suicide rates decrease during periods of social emergency. Smartphone-based EMA can allow us to remotely assess patients and overcome the physical barriers imposed by lockdown.

Full article: [Patients at high risk of suicide before and during a COVID-19 lockdown: ecological momentary assessment study](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/bjpsych-open/article/patients-at-high-risk-of-suicide-before-and-during-a-covid19-lockdown-ecological-momentary-assessment-study/A4B21E71A3DC1677B505B6648071F7B0)

**Title:** Study shows how lockdown has increased mental health difficulties for vulnerable children

JCPP Advances | April 2021

The pandemic increased mental health problems among vulnerable children, with financial strain on parents a major factor, a study by Cardiff University has found. During the pandemic, researchers interviewed 142 five to 10-year-olds who had been identified by schools as “at risk” for mental health problems, and they then compared this to pre-pandemic data.

Mental health problems, particularly anxiety, increased “significantly”, the study found.There was a strong link between financial stress and mental health problems in parents, which was in turn associated with worsening mental health issues among children, the researchers discovered.

Families whose financial circumstances have been seriously impacted by lockdown need monetary support and extra mental health support, they concluded.

Full document: [Understanding why the COVID‐19 pandemic‐related lockdown increases mental health difficulties in vulnerable young children](https://acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/jcv2.12005)

**Title:** The unequal mental health toll of the pandemic

The Health Foundation | 28th April 2021

Over the past year, mental health has been in the news continuously – an acknowledgement that the pandemic poses risks beyond our physical health. This article states now is the time to channel this interest and commit to making things better for people who were struggling both before and during the pandemic. We must also use greater interest in mental health from the public and from government to strengthen action on inequalities so we can tackle the causes of poor mental health.

The article identifies the following priorities:

* Better access to support
* Joined-up services
* Acknowledging distrust
* Working with lived experience

Full detail: [The unequal mental health toll of the pandemic](https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/blogs/the-unequal-mental-health-toll-of-the-pandemic)

**Title:** A Perfect Storm? Health Anxiety, Contamination Fears, and COVID-19: Lessons Learned from Past Pandemics and Current Challenges

International Journal of Cognitive Therapy | 22nd April 2021

The novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) rapidly spread, becoming a global pandemic with significant health, economic, and social impacts. COVID-19 has caused widespread anxiety, which at healthy levels leads to adaptive, protective behavioral changes. For some individuals, a pandemic outbreak can lead to excessive, maladaptive levels of anxiety, particularly among those with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and health anxiety.

This paper reviews past research studies that examined anxiety in response to other disease outbreaks (including Swine Flu, Zika, and Ebola) to serve as a guide for expectable responses to COVID-19.

The review focuses on the role of belief-based cognitive variables (obsessive beliefs, contamination cognitions), transdiagnostic processes (disgust sensitivity, anxiety sensitivity, an intolerance of uncertainty), social factors, and environmental/situational variables as contributing factors to excessive concerns about past pandemics. These factors in combination with unique characteristics of the virus (disease, behavioral, social and economic factors) and media consumption might enhance vulnerability to excessive anxiety about COVID-19, in line with a diathesis-stress model.

COVID-19 is also unique from past pandemics due to its severity, easy transmissibility, and the nature of prescribed behavioral responses (i.e., hand washing and social distancing). The review therefore discuss the ways in which COVID-19 may disproportionately affect individuals with OCD and health anxiety. The authors conclude with important topics for clinical and research attention to help mental health professionals respond in this time of crisis.

Full paper: [A Perfect Storm? Health anxiety, contamination fears, and Covid-19: lessons learned from past pandemics and current challenges](https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s41811-021-00109-7.pdf)

**Title:** Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and well-being of UK healthcare workers

BJPsych Open | 29th April 2021

Shortly after the April 2020 UK COVID-19 peak 2773 HCWs completed a survey containing measures of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and stress, as well as questions around potential predictors such as roles, COVID-19 risk perception and workplace-related factors.

Nearly a third of HCWs reported moderate to severe levels of anxiety and depression, and the number reporting very high symptoms was more than quadruple that pre-COVID-19. Several controllable factors were associated with the most severe level of psychiatric symptoms: insufficient personal protective equipment availability, workplace preparation, training and communication, and higher workload. Being female, ‘front line’, previous psychiatric diagnoses, traumatic events, and being an allied HCW or manager were also significantly associated with severe psychiatric symptoms.

Sharing stress, resilience and ethical support for treatment decisions were significantly associated with low psychiatric symptoms. Front-line workers showed greater worsening of mental health compared with non-front-line HCWs.

The study concludes that poor mental well-being was prevalent during the COVID-19 response, however, controllable factors associated with severe psychiatric symptoms are available to be targeted to reduce the detrimental impact of COVID-19 and other pandemics on HCW mental health.

Full paper: [Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and well-being of UK healthcare workers](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/bjpsych-open/article/impact-of-the-covid19-pandemic-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-of-uk-healthcare-workers/D7E2EA268395EC63205017929CD720D2)

**Title:** The first wave of the COVID‐19 pandemic and its impact on socioeconomic inequality in psychological distress in the UK

Health Economics | 26th April 2021

The first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic saw more people suffer mental health problems in the UK according to new research from the University of East Anglia and the University of York.

The research reveals that the amount of people suffering some form of psychological distress rose by almost 50 per cent during the peak of the pandemic’s first wave in April 2020, compared to 2019 figures. The prevalence of psychological distress increased from 19 per cent in 2019 to 28 per cent in April 2020. The study also shows that the distribution of mental health problems within the population became more unequal during the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak.

But the study, which follows people’s experience over time, shows that levels of psychological distress had moved back towards pre-pandemic levels by the end of the first wave in July 2020.

Full paper: [The first wave of the COVID‐19 pandemic and its impact on socioeconomic inequality in psychological distress in the UK](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/hec.4275)

**Title:** The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health in the general population: a comparison between Germany and the UK

BMC Psychology | 24th April 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to dramatic social and economic changes in daily life. First studies report an impact on mental health of the general population showing increased levels of anxiety, stress and depression. In this study, the authors compared the impact of the pandemic on two culturally and economically similar European countries: the UK and Germany.

Participants completed an online-survey assessing COVID-19 exposure, impact on financial situation and work, substance and media consumption, mental health using the Symptom-Check-List-27 (SCL-27) and the Schizotypal Personality Questionnaire.

The researchers found distinct differences between the two countries. UK responders reported a stronger direct impact on health, financial situation and families. UK responders had higher clinical scores on the SCL-27, and higher prevalence. Interestingly, German responders were less hopeful for an end of the pandemic and more concerned about their life-stability.

As 25% of both German and UK responders reported a subjective worsening of the general psychological symptoms and 20-50% of German and UK responders reached the clinical cut-off for depressive and dysthymic symptoms as well as anxieties, it specifically shows the need for tailored intervention systems to support large proportions of the general public.

Full paper: [The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health in the general population: a comparison between Germany and the UK](https://bmcpsychology.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s40359-021-00565-y.pdf)

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.

We also produce a range of subject-specific news feeds to ensure our clinical and professional teams stay up to date with developments in their work areas. Please visit our [website](http://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/) for more information

<https://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/health-newsfeeds.html>