

Psychological impact of coronavirus pandemic on health care workers

Panel Discussion

Listener feedback:

Jamieson P. has a pending comment on Bonus Short - COVID-19 Update.

Jamieson P. said:

I am finding myself at a major point of frustration...wondering if anyone is feeling the same way? Reading & listening to constant inflow of information about COVID19 and trying my best to keep up with it all. I work at a small walk-in/urgent care clinic in the southeastern US. My clinic is within the same building for OB/GYN, orthopedics & primary care practice. We are part of a larger health system however are getting almost no support in terms of PPE and practical guidance on infection control in the office. I have submitted recommendations to hospital infection control liaison with almost no feedback. It feels like no one around here is concerned beyond forwarding me emails from the CDC :(

We all as HCWs have multifaceted responsibilities, 1) as HCW's, but as important or more importantly, 2) to ourselves and families- how do we balance caring for patients as well as ourselves and families

Balance of our social and professional responsibility vs our individual responsibility to ourselves and our family.

1. What is your clinical setting and how has the pandemic affected your day to day work? How are they different, what are the commonalities?
2. How are you feeling about your job? Glad to be on the front line to help? Scared? Something else?
Do I need to go to work? What about my risks? What would happen if I didn't go to work? How to be a good colleague and family member? (SOL/NEDA)
3. Does your organization have a plan in place or are they scrambling? Do you trust your leadership is keeping you (and your patients) safe? (NEDA)
4. What are you doing to minimize your risk of spreading infection to yourself/family- list of top strategies that have evidence that work (MATT)
 - The same as I would do when I have the flu/norovirus
 - Wash my hands
 - Cover my cough
 - Wear a face mask if I'm coughing
 - Stay as safe as possible at work to prevent infection (PPE, wash hands, don't touch face/mouth/nose, restrict pt contact to only necessary contact)

- If I'm infected: keep to myself with care given to me by my wife/not kids
 - Sleep in another room, Use another bathroom, not share dishes/foods
 - Keep my pets away from me (or only with me)
 - Clean high touch areas (door knobs, counter tops, toilet flush)
 - Stay home unless I need to go out for medical care
5. Outside of work, how are you presenting the situation to your family/friends? How are they reacting? Are you worried about being side-eyed and people keeping their distance from you socially bc you are a HCW? Overpanic vs Blowing off concerns? What is the balance between making decisions based on facts when the facts are evolving? (MATT)
- Honestly and Realistically
 - Realizing we don't know everything about this virus yet but that what we do know is it is most dangerous for elderly/underlying medical conditions
 - Am I buying months worth of TP? No. Am I quarenting my children and myself from all human contact? No. But I am trying to make socially responsible decision while balancing the need to not spread panic/fear/alarms such as not having their grandparents babysit, or be in close contact with us until there is a bit more known about the virus. Not going to work while I'm sick. Not taking my kids to school or public while they are sick.
 - There are consequences to panic, you just have to look at the stock market and our politics to see that. We as medical providers need to be a voice of reason, responsibility, and calm especially when talking to members of the public who don't have the medical knowledge to make their informed decisions.
6. What are your plans if you are exposed/infected/quarantined? What are you doing to keep your sanity? (doing things that you have been putting off, writing chapters/papers, fun diversions) (MIKE)
- a. You never let a serious crisis go to waste. And what I mean by that it's an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before.

Rahm Emanuel

- b. "Sorry to be 'polyann-ish' but how about some of these ideas:
- c. Do a REALLY big project w the kids
- d. Study for board recert
- e. Make a top 10 list of medical complaints you don't feel comfortable with and read 2 articles on each
- f. Write a review article or case study for a journal
- g. Take the dogs for longer and more frequent walks
- h. Clean out the basement
- i. Clean out your sock drawer
- j. Do yard work
- k. Exercise EVERY day
- l. DON'T read covid stories on social media for more that 2 hours a day!

7. Many people seem interested in “what do you think as a medical professional” and “how scared should I REALLY be?”... How are you approaching this in person and on social media? (basics: wash hands, (MIKE/NEDA)
 - a. Through the ages, ‘healers’ have been looked upon during times of medical crisis. We are uniquely blessed in 2020 to have a bully pulpit and access to more knowledge and training than at anytime during human history
 - b. Though we may be panicking underneath, we need to project calm and repeat things at help: social distancing, hand washing, self-quarantine
 - c. At work we should continue what we do best: universal precautions, gloves, hand sanitising or washing, keeping 5 feet from our patients during the history, having patients who are coughing wear a mask, etc
8. Any last thoughts:
Ok to feel how you are feeling (NEDA)

REFERENCES:

- 1) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html>