

The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health of Health Care Workers of Bahrain Defence Force Royal Medical Services

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ABSTRACT

Background: Literature from around the globe shows that Health Care Workers (HCW) on the front line who are exposed to patients with COVID-19, and previously, other viral epidemics, are at risk of developing adverse psychological reactions such as anxiety and depression. The objective of this study is to perform an evidence-based evaluations of the mental health of HCW in Bahrain Defence Force Royal Medical Services (BDFRMS) Hospital with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods: A cross-sectional, survey-based study from BDFRMS Hospital. In the study, an online survey was created using two internationally validated diagnostic scales; the 9-item Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), and the 7-item Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7), and the survey was distributed among HCWs by electronic messaging via email or phone. The data obtained was used for statistical analysis to identify the symptoms of anxiety, depression and associated risk factors based on mental health diagnostic scales, demographic, clinical, and work-related data.

Results: The prevalence of HCWs experiencing anxiety among the sample in this study was 19.6 % and the prevalence of depression was 20.5 %. The prevalence of GAD was significantly higher among HCW covering on calls/shifts [OR=2.307, 95% CI (1.010, 5.269), P-value=0.046]. The odds of experiencing GAD and/or depression was higher among HCWs with higher exposure to COVID19. The prevalence of GAD and depression was also higher among HCWs who have changed their living circumstances for safety measures and are working away from their families.

Conclusion: HCWs are a vulnerable group to both depression and anxiety, and that was found to be directly proportional to exposure to COVID-19. Stigmatization of mental illness and reluctance to seek help increase vulnerability of HCWs to adverse psychological reactions. The study recommends increasing the awareness of the importance of mental healthcare in pandemics and estimate the mental health burden of COVID-19 and can further be used to promote the mental well-being among HCW.

Keywords: Depression, Anxiety, COVID-19, Pandemic, Health Care Workers

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