



Dynamic of Mental State of Healthcare Professionals in Intensive Care Unit During the Covid 19 Pandemic: A Qualitative Approach

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PUBLISHED ABSTRACT



ABSTRACT

In March 2020, New York City observed its first cases of COVID-19. A couple of weeks later, the number of patients testing positive for SAR-CoV-2 reached such a level that authorities declared mandatory lockdown and mandatory social distancing. The months that followed put the healthcare workforce under extreme pressure. Longer hours and self-isolation were among some of the challenges.

In this study, we adopt a qualitative approach to underline the mental state of healthcare professionals who actively work in intensive care units at the surge of the pandemic. More than an enumeration of psychiatric disorders, we wanted to focus on the dynamics of their mental state, identify how they felt before the pandemic, during the pandemic, after it subsided, and what was helping them cope.

We collected five (5) interviews. The average time was 18 min and it led to 24 pages of transcribed data. The majority of the participants were female. The sample included one social worker, one nurse, and three physicians. The minimum of time involved in the ICU was two weeks.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the main theme was the feeling of concern. During the surge, the fear of getting sick or fear of infecting loved ones, trouble sleeping, burnout, or sadness were common. In addition, a sense of hopelessness and report of phantom symptoms related to Covid transpired.

The coping mechanism varied. On a personal level, healthcare workers valued activities promoting self-care. Few used the help of a psychiatrist but those who did found it beneficial. A sense of purpose kept them engaged and a supportive community also helped.

In the post-covid surge, exhaustion, fear of a second wave, loss of career purposefulness, or frustration predominated.

The covid pandemic was and still is a challenging experience for many healthcare professionals. As the crisis is yet to be resolved, a need to find ways to maintain this indispensable workforce is imperative. Identifying their mental state per stage will help plan for better interventions before it is needed.

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KEYWORDS:
Healthcare professionals;
Covid-19; mental health;
coping mechanisms

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:
Nnemnbeng JF. Dynamic of
Mental State of Healthcare
Professionals in Intensive
Care Unit During the Covid
19 Pandemic: A Qualitative
Approach. *ISMMS Journal of
Science and Medicine*. 2021;
1(2): 12, pp. 1-2. DOI: [https://
doi.org/10.29024/ijsm.62](https://doi.org/10.29024/ijsm.62)

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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*ISMMS Journal of Science
and Medicine*
DOI: 10.29024/ijsm.62

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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Nnemng JF. Dynamic of Mental State of Healthcare Professionals in Intensive Care Unit During the Covid 19 Pandemic: A Qualitative Approach. *ISMMS Journal of Science and Medicine*. 2021; 1(2): 12, pp. 1–2. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29024/ijsm.62>

Submitted: 20 April 2021

Accepted: 20 April 2021

Published: 12 May 2021

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