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# **THE Health Care Workers Mental Health Concerns during COVID-19 Pandemic: Strategies for resilience**

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**SPEAKER**

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## BACKGROUND

- The COVID19 pandemic on health-care systems.
- The conclusion of the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee on COVID-19, which held its fourth meeting on 31 July 2020, was that;  
“the pandemic will require sustained, long-term response efforts at the community, national, regional, and global levels.”

## BACKGROUND

•Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, shared the committee's view, stating, that;

*“Many countries that believed they were past the worst are now grappling with new outbreaks. Some that were less affected in the earliest weeks are now seeing escalating numbers of cases and deaths.”*

## BACKGROUND

WHO continues to mobilize global organizations and partners:

- For COVID-19 preparedness and response,
- To support Member States in maintaining health services.

WHO has also called upon countries to join initiatives to combat the pandemic



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## BACKGROUND

- First COVID-19 case in Kenya on March 13, 2020:
  - the new cases and their impact have been on the rise.
- Currently, the impact and spread of infections are feared to be exacerbated by our socioeconomic situations.

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## MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

- The well-being and mental health of health-care professionals continue to elicit discussions at different levels.
- Many healthcare workers:
  - Contracting infection
  - some others who remain in contact with those positive cases are going to self-quarantine
- Governments actions resulting in dignity violations, economic and psychological distress.

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## MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

- Measures taken by Kenyan government:
  - Dusk to dawn curfew,
  - Closure of public spaces,
  - Limiting movements
  - Ensuring hand hygiene
  - Social distancing.
- Their negative effects is being felt by the citizenry.

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## MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

- The negative socioeconomic impact has led to disruption likely to affect mental health of healthcare workers, whom are part of the general population.
- Specific healthcare worker's mental health concerns include: loneliness, uncertainty, fear, anxiety, depression, Suicidal thoughts, Substance abuse and worsening preexisting mental conditions among others.



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# MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

## A. Feeling of Isolation and Loneliness

- Social distancing and avoid gatherings
- Stay home orders
- Wearing of face masks,
- Forced quarantine

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## MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

- Effects of isolation and loneliness on mental health:
  - Depression
  - Suicidal ideations
  - Heightened anxiety.
  - Overeating
  - Substance abuse
  - Conflict

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# MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

## B. Uncertainty and fear

### Uncertainty:

- About the future,
- Financial/economic

### Fear:

- being infected,
- economic downturn
- unavailability of specific therapeutic medications.



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# MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

## C. Anxiety

- Resulted from:
  - 24/7 media coverage .
  - Seeing television pictures of people getting impacted by the Pandemic
  - Working remotely under pressure from employers.
  - Lack of division between free (personal) time and work time.
- Worsened existing anxiety states: PTSD, OCD.

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# MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

## D. Depression and suicidal ideations

- Lost interest
- Altered sleep and eating pattern
- Reduced energy levels
- Negative view of the future: no treatment, vaccine
- Self blame: economic failure due to COVID, lost relative to COVID
- Recurrent thoughts of taking one's life

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# MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

## E. Substance abuse

- Maladaptive coping strategy: anxiety related to COVID19, temporary reprieve from the socio-economic downturn due to COVID19
- Few working hours: more time available for substance seeking behavior

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# MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

## EARLY SIGNS THAT ALL IS NOT OK!

- Constant Fatigue
- Anhedonia and avolition
- Feeling Overworked or Under-Appreciated
- Compassion Fatigue
- Lack of Enthusiasm about your Work

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# Resilience Strategies

- Lets remember that “ **when the going gets tough, the tough ones gets creative**”
- The ‘**Five Ways to Wellbeing**’ are a simple set of practical actions that can be performed daily to help achieve resilience.
- They are to:
  - **Learn,**
  - **Connect,**
  - **Give**
  - **Take notice**
  - **Be active.**



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# Resilience Strategies

Other than the “five wellbeing” strategies I also recommend the following as resilience strategies during this current novel corona virus pandemic

- **Take a break**
- **Avoid alcohol and other substances**
- **Eat Healthy diet**
- **Rest and sleep**

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# Resilience Strategies

- **Stroll around (milieu therapy)**
- **Build a routine.**
- **Seek professional help**

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# CONCLUSION

- From its beginning, it was recognized that the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic would likely create a burden on mental ill-health in the general population.
- However, pandemics are multifaceted phenomena, exposing people not only to the risk of illness, but also to the social restrictions and potential economic hardships that are necessitated by efforts to control its spread.

## CONCLUSION

- Health professionals have changed their way of life and working to decrease coronavirus infectivity, causing additional stress and increasing potential for mental illnesses
- The continued so called “thirdwave” spread of COVID-19 prompt psychological trouble and so emphasizing on the need for resilience strategies useful in uplifting the mental wellbeing of health care workers.

# CONCLUSION

- The suggested resilience strategies include; learning, staying connected, giving, taking notice of present moments, being active, taking time off, avoiding substances abuse, seeking prompt help, healthy eating, enough rest, strolling around and building a daily routine.
- It is important to continue having these conversations to find amicable ways of improving resilience by healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep them in a good state of mental health even as they remain the frontliners in the fight against COVID19 pandemic.



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# Further Readings

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**“When the going gets tough, the tough gets creative!”**

**THE END**  
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