

Long-Term Mental Health Research Needed for COVID-19 Healthcare Workers in Mexico

Dear Editor,

The first recorded case of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Mexico was on January 3, 2020. Since then, there have been 2,861,498 confirmed cases and 241,279 recorded deaths as of August 4, 2021.^[1] This unprecedented situation has put considerable strain on health systems around the world. By September 2020, Mexico ranked number one in healthcare worker (HCW) deaths due to COVID-19 at 1,320, despite having a much lower COVID-19 incidence in the general population than other countries.^[2]

Current research shows that HCWs have suffered increased rates of stress, anxiety, insomnia, and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic. Systematic reviews found various risk factors for increased psychological distress, such as proximity to COVID-19 patients, female gender, younger age, perceived negative stigma of HCWs due to high risk of exposure, and social isolation.^[3,4] Resilience factors among HCWs found in both COVID-19 and previous epidemics, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome, included adequate workplace communication and training, availability of PPE, and strong social support systems.^[4] Restrictive measures, such as social distancing, are necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but they also reduce HCWs access to social support outside of the workplace.

Numerous cross-sectional surveys have been conducted assessing the mental health of HCWs during COVID-19, but these studies have limitations due to sociocultural context and stigma. These factors play a role in participant's perceptions of mental health and coping strategies during the pandemic.^[4,5] There is a need for long-term cohort studies to assess mental health during the pandemic, specifically in Mexico.

Given the high mortality rate among HCWs in Mexico and existing research showing a strong correlation between the pandemic and negative impacts on mental health, we recommend examining the correlation between demographics, behavioral characteristics, and occupational safety on stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, and trauma among HCWs in Mexico. Data must be collected to guide evidence-based interventions to improve the mental health of HCWs, which not only impacts their own wellbeing, but also the quality of care provided to patients. Our pilot survey to HCWs at a COVID-19 clinic in Querétaro, Mexico has confirmed the findings of existing research.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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