

## Editorial

# Who Will Heal The Healers?

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## Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic has caused massive concern globally affecting the mental health of the public and healthcare workers alike. The healthcare personnel working in the front lines are the most vulnerable. There is a need for sustained mental health support programs for the healthcare workers.

## DEAR EDITOR

The world has been witnessing an unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic which has been wreaking havoc for the past few months. COVID-19 pandemic has changed life as we know it. This viral pandemic has caused fear and massive concern globally and has affected the mental health of not only the general public [1], but also the healthcare workers. Healthcare personnel including doctors, nurses and paramedical staff working in the front lines are amongst the most vulnerable. These healthcare workers including are the unsung heroes fighting this war in the front lines against COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, they are also the most vulnerable for the mental and physical onslaught brought on by the pandemic. In Wuhan and other regions in China, the healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients have reported higher levels of depression, anxiety, insomnia and distress [2].

Healthcare workers constantly fear contagion and infection transmission to their family members and friends [2,3]. At present there is a focus on keeping the emergency departments clear of patients other than trauma and potential COVID-19 patients. The tragedy of patients dying alone is not only heartbreaking for the family members but also for the healthcare workers involved. Shortages of personal protective equipment for healthcare workers and ventilators are a very valid concern adding to the stress level [4].

It is understandable that the mental health issues and wellbeing of the healthcare workers will take a backseat at present. Many retired healthcare workers have answered the call for help around the world. None have ever experienced dealing with a dilemma of this magnitude. The general public is doing their best to lift their morale. People in various cities around the world are standing on balconies and leaning out of windows to clap and cheer the healthcare workers. They are also donating supplies to hospitals. There are companies offering free products and services to healthcare workers.

We need to be cognizant of the mental health challenges brought on by the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic to our

communities. This includes the healthcare workers who already have a higher burnout and depression rate with only a few receiving the required treatment [5].

Figure 1 shows some pertinent factors negatively affecting the mental health of the healthcare workers. There is a need for sustained mental health support programs for the healthcare workers. This is pertinent not only to take care of their acute mental health issues, but also to minimize the impact of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD). There is a need for formulating a robust policy specifically designed to endorse regular, quick mental health checks as a part of an ongoing



**Figure 1** Factors affecting mental health of healthcare workers globally during COVID-19 pandemic.

mental health support program in various individual institutions across states and countries. Moving forward, there is a need for evidence-based action plans including sustained mental health support and active monitoring of the healthcare workers not only during crisis but also in the aftermath.

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