Supporting the Well-being of Health Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Albert W. Wu, M.D., M.P.H.
Professor of Health Policy and Management and Medicine
Director, Center for Health Services and Outcomes Research,
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
C0-Director, RISE (Resilience in Stressful Events)
Objectives

• To describe the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the psychological well-being of health care workers
• To discuss the potential impact on patient care and institutional resilience
• To review steps that health care institutions can take to support health workers
COVID-19: The defining health crisis of our generation

• Health care already a high-risk environment for workers
• Straining health care staff
• Patient care creates personal risk
• Threatens emotional well-being
Risks to Emotional Well-being of Health Care workers

• Short term
  – Fear, anxiety for self and family, role change
  – Anger and frustration
  – Anguish and grief
  – Separation

• Longer term
  – Burnout, worsening mental health conditions
  – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
Risk to Mission

- Distress can be disabling
- Reduced performance
- Absenteeism
- Threat to institutional response
Addressing Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

- **Physiological needs:** food, water, warmth, rest
- **Safety needs:** security, safety
- **Belongingness and love needs:** intimate relationships, friends
- **Esteem needs:** prestige and feeling of accomplishment
- **Self-actualization:** achieving one’s full potential, including creative activities

Self-fulfillment needs

Psychological needs

Basic needs
Basic Needs

- Food, sleep, rest, exercise
  - Meals
  - Hotel rooms
- New demands
  - Transportation
  - Childcare
  - Groceries
Worker Safety

- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- How to use it properly
- Protocols and rules
- Testing
Psychological Needs
Crisis Leadership and Communication

- Fight-or-flight state reduces
  - Ability to think rationally
  - Receive information and accept orders
- Communicate
  - Listen and normalize feelings
  - Often and honestly
  - Provide clear and optimistic vision and plan
  - Focus on resilience + group cohesion
Coordinating Committee on Staff Support
Johns Hopkins Integrated Continuum for Staff Support

- Office of Well-Being
- Healthy at Hopkins
- Spiritual Care
- RISE: Resilience in Stressful Events
- mySupport
- Department of Psychiatry
Office of Well-Being

FOR ALL JHM FACULTY & STAFF

COVID-19 Support Resources
Access a comprehensive list of online support resources for all Johns Hopkins faculty and staff.

Basic Needs Resources

Mental, Emotional, Spiritual Supports

Arts for Healing

Physical Activity Resources
Healthy at Hopkins

• Extensive and coordinated wellness programs

• Expanded to include basic support including child care and food for staff
Spiritual Care

- Critical role in staff support
- Regularly rounding on the wards
- Well known to staff from previous collaborative care
RISE: Resilience in Stressful Events

- Lead by Albert Wu, Cheryl Connors and Matt Norvell
- Trained peer support response teams
- Rounding on key units during COVID-19 crisis
- Now expanding teams

Information about training:
- https://www.marylandpatientsafety.org

Wu, Connors & Everly, Annals of Internal Medicine, 2020
Psychological First Aid

Dr. George Everly’s Coursera Course

RAPID

• Rapport and Reflective Listening
• Assessment of current needs
• Prioritization
• Intervention – what can we do now to offer help
• Disposition and referral

https://www.coursera.org/learn/psychological-first-aid/
mySupport

Phone assistance, short term counseling, and referral for staff AND their families

Real solutions for real life
Johns Hopkins Psychiatry

- COVR-JHM Clinic
  - Care for frontline health care workers
  - Individual psychiatric assessments
  - Follow-up treatment

- Group therapy

- Referrals from
  - Healthy at Hopkins, Spiritual Care, RISE, mySupport
  - Consultants, individuals, supervisors, peers
Phases of Psychological Response to Disaster

Developed by George Everly, PhD
Summary

- Staff caring for people with COVID-19 are anxious, fearful, off-balance, missing support
- Confused, angry, sad
- Health care institutions should support basic needs and safety
- Provide a continuum of staff support to maintain their well-being
The fundamental key to addressing a crisis is for leaders to not only be honest about the situation and what you’re going to do about it, but that you do so with clarity, humility and heart so as to remind people we’re in this together.

- Tanveer Naseer