



NEWS RELEASE

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Mental health support for health care workers during COVID-19 pandemic

Article in March 2021 issue of The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Illinois, February 23, 2021) – The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented levels of anxiety, insomnia, depression and distress to health care workers, according to preliminary studies.^{1,2}

A new article in the March 2021 issue of *The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety*, "[Staff Emotional Support at Montefiore Medical Center During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)," details how Montefiore Medical Center (MMC) – located in the Bronx, the borough hardest hit by COVID-19 in New York City – implemented various mental health services to mitigate and treat psychological distress among staff. Interventions implemented during the pandemic included:

- Psychoeducational resources (including invited presentations, grand rounds and web-based resources)
- Telephone support line
- Staff Support Centers (SSCs)
- Clinical treatment program
- Parenting skills and support groups
- Team support sessions
- Peer support outreach
- Mental health and wellness programs
- Clergy support

¹ Lai J, et al. Factors associated with mental health outcomes among health care workers exposed to coronavirus disease 2019. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2020 Mar 2;3:e203976.

² Pappa S, et al. Prevalence of depression, anxiety, and insomnia among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Brain Behav Immun*. 2020;88:901–907.

The most heavily used service was SSCs and the least used service was clergy support. The SSCs were promoted as locations to balance work with self-care and safe places to nurture health care workers' well-being. They were originally opened with limited hours but quickly expanded to include weekday access. Utilization of SSCs grew from 25 visits on the first day to more than 750 daily visits during the height of the pandemic. There were more than 32,000 visits recorded from March to mid-June 2020.

The article highlights “some useful psychologically based interventions, but these cannot be undertaken in isolation from practical steps such as good communication, appropriate training, access to personal protective equipment (PPE), adequate rest and practical support,” adds an [accompanying editorial](#) by Steve Kisely, MD, PhD, DMedRes.

Also featured in the March issue:

- [The Role of Institution-Based Peer Support for Health Care Workers Emotionally Affected by Workplace Violence](#) (The Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, and University of Missouri Health Care, Columbia, Missouri)
- [The Impact of an Inpatient Nurse-Triggered Sepsis Alert on Antimicrobial Utilization](#) (University of California, San Diego Health, San Diego)
- [Does ‘Code Sepsis’ Stifle Antimicrobial Stewardship?](#) (editorial)
- [The Effect of Blue-Enriched Light on Medical Error Rate in a University Hospital ICU](#) (University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, Madison, Wisconsin)
- [Predictors and Outcomes of Patient Knowledge of Plan of Care in Hospital Medicine: A Quality Improvement Study](#) (ChristianaCare Health Services, Newark, Delaware)
- [A Veterans Affairs Primary Care Same-Day Open Access for New Patients Optimized Redesigned System \(VA-HONORS\): A Six-Year Analysis of 22,220 Patient Records](#) (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Loma Linda Healthcare System, Loma Linda, California)
- [Lessons Learned from Virtual Handshake Stewardship During a Pandemic](#) (commentary)
- [Public Accountability and the Technologic Imperative: The Interplay Between Public Reporting and Cardiac Surgery Outcomes in the United States](#) (commentary)

For more information, visit [The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety website](#).

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Note for editors

The article is “[Staff Emotional Support at Montefiore Medical Center During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)” by Carol A. Bernstein, MD; Sriya Bhattacharyya, PhD; Shelby Adler; and Jonathan E. Alpert, MD, PhD. The article appears in *The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety*, volume 47, number 3 (March 2021), published by Elsevier.

The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety

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