

# Mental And Emotional Wellbeing Of HCWs During A Pandemic

## Ways HCW Tend To Cope And The Support Needed

*To be updated periodically: Updated 04/23/2021*

**Mark Nichter PhD, MPH<sup>1</sup>, Collin Catalfamo, MPH<sup>2</sup>, Amy Lind, MPH<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> School of Anthropology, The University of Arizona

<sup>2</sup> Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, The University of Arizona



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# The toll of pandemics on HCWs is significant given its duration

- During major epidemic outbreaks, demand for healthcare workers (HCWs) grows even as the extreme pressures they face cause declining availability.
- During an outbreak, HCWs are expected to work long hours under significant pressure with often inadequate resources, while accepting the dangers inherent in close interaction with ill patients and emotional fatigue.
- HCWs, like everyone else, are vulnerable to the disease itself and to rumors and misinformation/disinformation especially from political leaders which leads to both an increase in anxiety levels and a growing sense of moral distress.



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# 12 Different Ways COVID-19 Affects The Emotional (And Mental) Wellbeing of HCWs

- 1. Environmental stress:** working in an environment of risk without a sense of PPE protection, stress of seeing public not wearing masks in our presence when requested to do so as a civic duty – i.e., not following rules etc.
- 2. Anticipatory anxiety :** are the symptoms I am experiencing signs of COVID-19 or signs of a cold, allergies, some other illness
- 3. Anticipatory distress :** I have someone I am responsible for caring for with a precondition or who is in the highest risk age group, and I have to work in an environment of risk engaged in essential services, and/or to support my family which is living on the margin
- 4. COVID-19 guilt :** Have I infected my family with the virus, am I putting my family at risk today



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5. **Adopting an “at risk” role that is psychologically draining**: being hyper vigilant leading to anxiety and paranoia
6. **Caution fatigue**: can not deal with having to be cautious all the time, longing for activities that define the person, contact with others that is sensorial etc.
7. **Depression associated with isolation**
  5. **When physical distancing becomes social distancing**
    5. ex. I can not see my grandchildren, or my mother who is in a care facility not allowing visitors
  6. **Social risk**: fear of losing an existing or desired social relationship and even one’s sense of identity



# 12 Different Ways COVID-19 Affects The Emotional (And Mental) Wellbeing of HCWs

8. **Emotional cascade** associated with too much uncertainty in too many areas of life : no back up plan for employment, rent, etc.
9. **Emotional fatigue** from dealing with too much depressing /terrifying news about the disease and the state of the country leading to a sense of doom and dread
10. **Emotional hollowness** associated with too much screen time and too little sense based human contact human
  - ✓ Sense of lack, or connection
  - ✓ Sense of dissociation , feeling of interacting that is two dimensional and not three dimensional



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# 12 Different Ways COVID-19 Affects The Emotional (And Mental) Wellbeing of HCWs

- 11. Sense of deep loss and vulnerability** : psychological trauma of losing a colleague be it near or far
- 12. Fuck it syndrome** : feeling this is all a bit much , can't live my life this way- and deciding to take risks as a means of returning to a familiar or comfortable life ...yet worrying about it ..... or entering a state of denial that is challenged by some ( significant others, colleagues etc.) around you



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# Health care workers are generally givers. Many find it difficult to ask for support.

- A “take charge” , “be in control” attitude is common among many health workers
- Health workers are often represented as “super heroes” on the frontline in a war against COVID -19
- While being heroes is gratifying, HCW are beginning to come forward and express feelings of vulnerability while working long hours in environments of high risk and high mortality.
- Those working at lower rungs of the health care system (like those working in long term care facilities) with poor access to PPE and health care safety nets are little acknowledged and see themselves more as dispensable workers in system that cares little about them



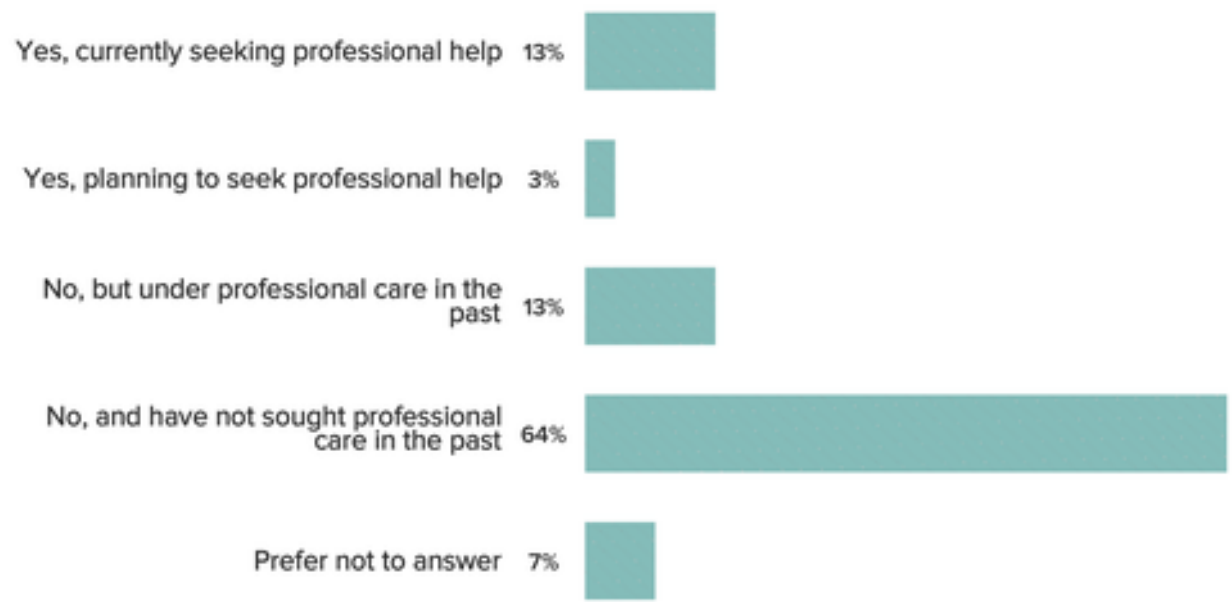
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## Do You Plan to Seek Help for Burnout or Depression?



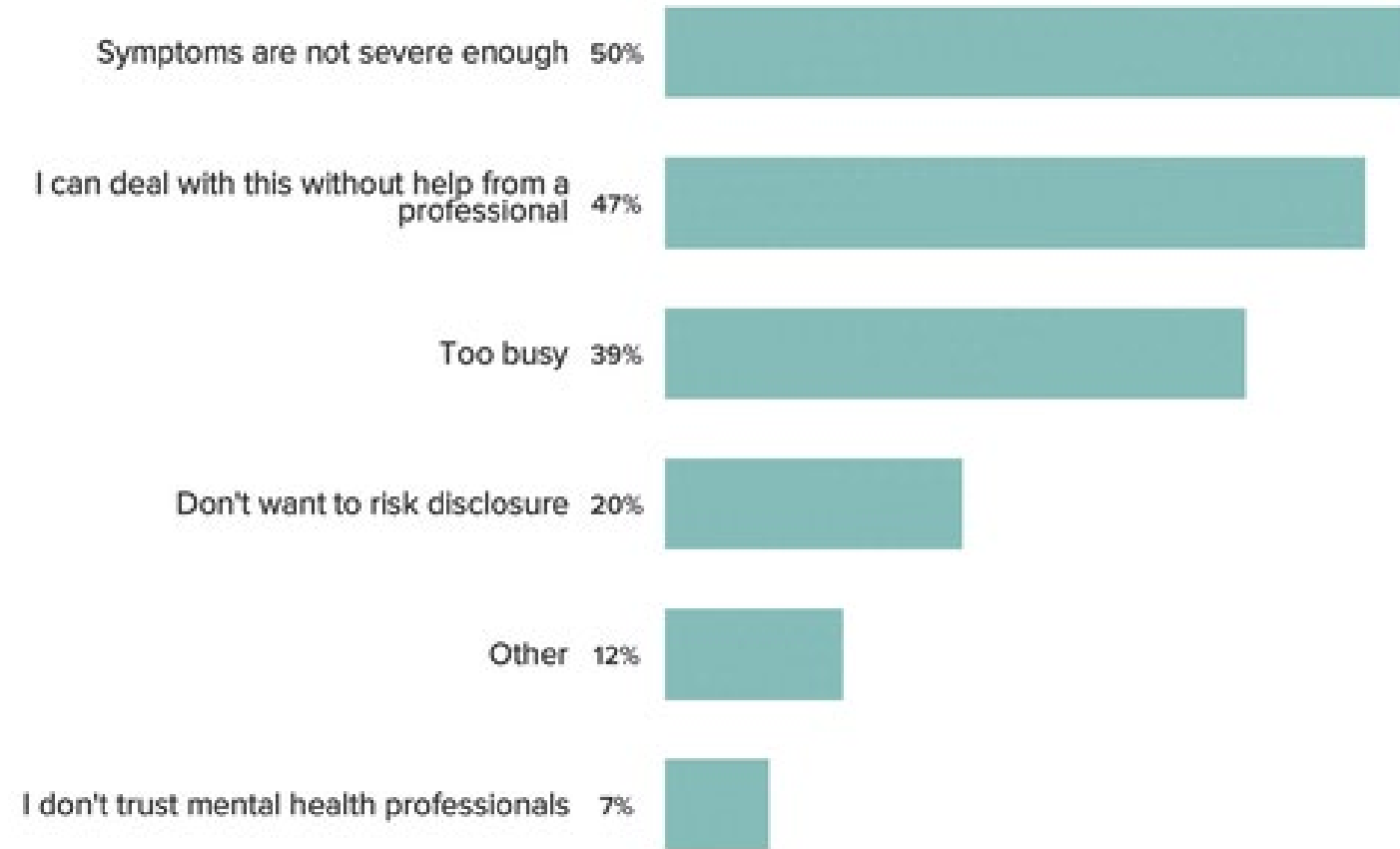
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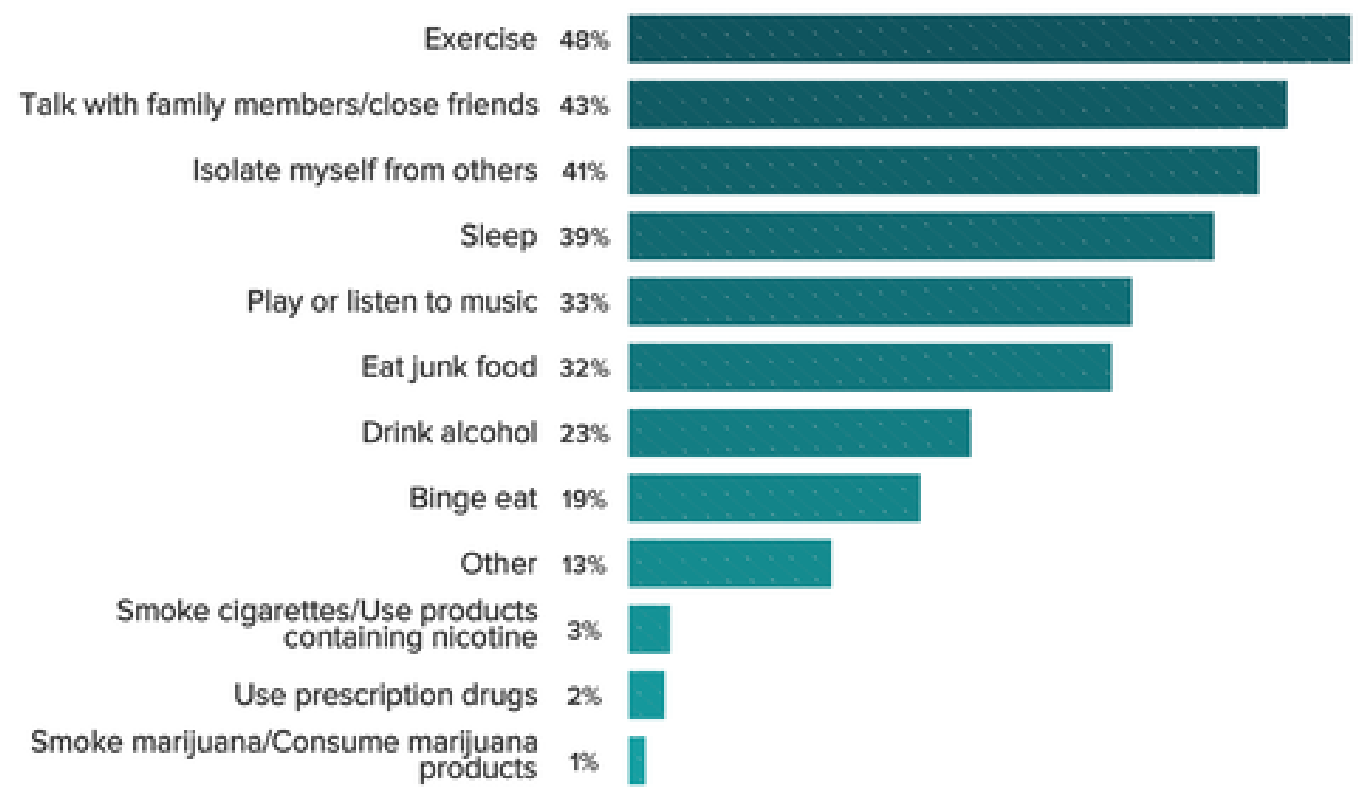


## Why Have You Not Gotten Help?





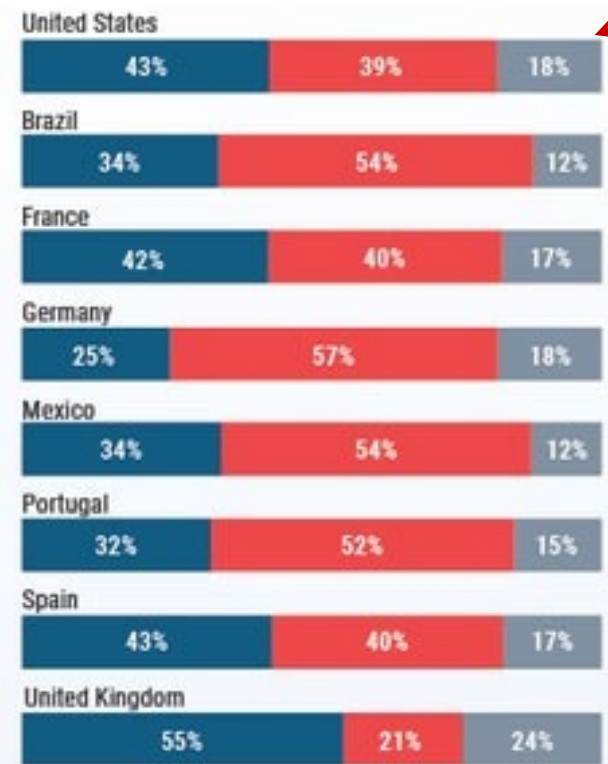
## How Do Physicians Cope With Burnout?





## Does Your Workplace Offer Activities to Help Clinicians With Grief and Stress?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure



# HCW Support

What is needed



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## 8 DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

### EMOTIONAL

Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships.

### FINANCIAL

Satisfaction with current and future financial situations.

### ENVIRONMENTAL

Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being.

### SOCIAL

Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system.

### INTELLECTUAL

Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills.

### SPIRITUAL

Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life.

### PHYSICAL

Recognizing the need for physical activity, diet, sleep, and nutrition.

### OCCUPATIONAL

Personal satisfaction and enrichment derived from one's work.



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# Strategies for healthcare worker wellness : based on international review of existing studies

- ✓ Quality, accessible PPE for all HCWs to provide security and reduce likelihood of infection for themselves and their loved ones.
- ✓ Individual AND organizational strategies to optimize wellness for healthcare providers in areas of nutrition, exercise, mindfulness, sleep quality, and reducing burnout.
- ✓ Short-term and long-term individualized wellness and mental health interventions to address the physical and emotional tolls of COVID-19.
- ✓ Immediate and individualized access to psychological first aid mental health resources.
- ✓ Opportunities to implement telehealth in a variety of settings to limit exposure to infection
- ✓ Reduce stigma on mental health symptoms and the psychological impact of significant stressful events within HCWs.
- ✓ Development of new HCW community groups and encouragement of participation to allow connections and reduce feelings of isolation.



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# The need for HCW self-quarantine

- **OSHA recommends that healthcare facilities** plan accordingly for the possibility of separate housing for HCWs in the event of pandemic influenza.
  - COVID-19 spreads very similarly to influenza, so these same precautions should be implemented.
- Because of increased risk of infection, and chance of unknowingly spreading infection to families, HCWs may need to self-isolate.
  - Those with the ability to do so may isolate at their homes in quarantine rooms
- **Many HCW, especially those who are lower tier essential workers, may not have the resources to self isolate and live in multigenerational households with family members at high risk to experiencing a severe case of COVID-19 due to their age or a precondition**
  - Some have begun camping out in their basements, tents, garages, and tree houses in the backyard.







# Needs of HCWs in self-quarantine

- Places to isolate and keep family safe are essential. HCW that do not have such spaces need to be supported with safe affordable if not free housing
- In the event of self-quarantine and separate housing of HCWs, it is **imperative that these be restful locations with access to adequate meals**
  - This alone is why many “at-home” situations are less than ideal for HCWs
- Because they are also leaving their families behind, they may also need assistance with childcare or pet care
  - HCWs may not have a spouse or partner to assist to take on childcare
  - Their spouses/partners may also be a member of the essential workforce
  - Pet fosters can reduce worry about pet-care in the event of self-quarantine



# HCW families' need support : This is why HCWhosted.org treats the family as our unit of support

- In addition to needing assistance with **childcare** and **other errands**, families of HCWs also **need social support**.
  - Studies in China during the height of their COVID-19 outbreak showed that HCW's families were at increased risk of **developing symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder** and **depression**.
- **Keeping open lines of communication** with their HCW family members and **providing information to families** can help to reduce these mental health impacts.
- Assisting in childcare and errands for these families can significantly reduce the impact of stressors from daily basic needs.
  - Some communities have set up networks where students and volunteers can be assigned to families to assist with errands and babysitting that reduce the impact of HCW self-isolating or maintain long working hours.



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# Even small support efforts matter, knowing someone has your back and cares



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# Trust in the workplace is essential to HCW wellbeing

- **To counteract the potential decline in HCW availability due to fear and anxiety, and to curtail the potential rise of nosocomial infection, it is critical to strengthen HCW safety and trust in the system within which they work.**
- **Workplace Safety is a primary health concern for HCW**



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