

High rates of depression, anxiety, PTSD worldwide among health workers during COVID-19

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A new systematic review of 65 studies from around the world involves a total of 97,333 health care workers and finds that 1 in 5 have experienced depression, anxiety, and/or PTSD during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Yufei Li, Nathaniel Scherer, and colleagues at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, U.K., present these findings in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* on March 10.

The pandemic has posed significant challenges for [health care workers](#), with many fearing for their own safety while facing a high workload and limited psychological support. Previous analyses of data from multiple studies have revealed high rates of depression, anxiety, and PTSD among health care

workers during the pandemic. However, those reviews did not adequately address the many relevant studies conducted in China, where the first COVID-19 outbreak occurred.

To address that gap, Li, Scherer, and colleagues carried out a systematic search of studies in both English and Chinese that were conducted from December 2019 to August 2020 and addressed prevalence of mental disorders in health care workers. They identified 65 suitable studies from 21 countries, involving a total of 97,333 health care workers.

By pooling and statistically analyzing data from all 65 studies, the researchers estimated that 21.7 percent of the health care workers involved in the studies have experienced depression during the pandemic, 22.1 percent anxiety, and 21.5 percent PTSD. Studies conducted in the Middle East showed the highest pooled rates of depression (34.6 percent) and anxiety (28.9 percent).

These findings suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the mental health of health care workers. For comparison, the World Health Organization estimates that 4.4 percent of the entire world population experience depression, and 3.6 percent experience anxiety disorders, including PTSD. However, those estimates were determined through different methods and prior to the pandemic.

Nonetheless, the authors note, the new findings could help inform policy and initiatives to provide urgently needed psychological support to health care workers.

The authors add: "This [systematic review](#) and meta-analysis provides, to date, the most comprehensive synthesis of depression, anxiety and PTSD

prevalence amongst [health](#) care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the unique inclusion of publications in both English and Chinese."

More information: Li Y, Scherer N, Felix L, Kuper H (2021) Prevalence of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder in health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS ONE* 16(3): e0246454.
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