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Overcoming Stress during the COVID19 Pandemic?

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 epidemic is a global public health emergency causing an adverse impact on people's lives from different perspectives. One factor about COVID19 has contributed to physical and psychological diseases among people that sometimes even leads to the higher risk of suicide. The aim of this short essay is to discuss stress responses and how to manage these reactions. I will also discuss some contributing factors behind suicidal acts and the ways to overcome suicidal thoughts during pandemic.

Keywords: COVID19, stress management, suicide prevention

The epidemic of the 2019 novel coronavirus disease first expanded from the Wuhan region of China and quickly spread to other countries. This transmitted infectious disease quickly caught worldwide attention leaving people in fear, especially in the absence of a vaccine. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared it as a global pandemic and an international public emergency. Social isolation and various symptoms, along with constantly evolving updates about the infection leads to psychological

distress among people around a globe, (Hawryluck et al. 2004). This review intends to discuss the stress response related to the COVID19 outbreak and how to address the stress through some of the strategies discussed below. The stress response can be perceived in different forms.

MAIN ARGUMENT

Some of the preventive measures to endure COVID-19 include quarantines, and social distancing; however, these strategies contribute to stress. The stress response, or “flight or fight” response is the emergency reaction system of the body. It involves physical and thought responses to one’s opinion of various situations. According to Huntley, et al. (2009) when the stress response is activated, one’s body may release substances like adrenaline and cortisol. One’s organs are programmed to respond in certain ways to situations that are perceived as threatening and challenging. Stress response can be different for different individuals. Some of the physical stress response are: muscle aches, constipation, increase in heart beat rate, dizziness, stomach cramps, leg cramps, low energy, weight gain, dry mouth, diarrhea, sweating, headache, nausea. Resultantly, people can be subjected to neck pain, chest pain, high blood pressure, and increased urination. Emotional and thought stress responses are: restlessness, agitation, worthlessness, depression, guilt, anger, mood swings, poor concentration, expecting the worst, overthinking, forgetfulness, intolerance, impatient. Behavioral stress responses are: avoidance, neglect, increase in smoking, poor appearance, poor appetite, nail biting, sexual problems, poor exercise, aggressive speaking, over sleeping. Stress response can adversely affect one with social withdrawal, poor hygiene, teeth clenching, seeking reassurance, alcohol use, arguing, multitasking, uninterested in fun activities. Feeling of being ‘out of our control’ because of these circumstances trigger negative feelings and emotions such as aggressiveness and fear.

There are many contributing factors behind stress during pandemic, The most common immediate psychological disturbances among the pandemic survivors are depression that even push towards suicidal thoughts. Different life experiences affect person’s risk for suicide. The group most vulnerable to suicide includes people suffering in poverty. Also repeated exposure to stories about the crisis can increase fear and heighten suicidal risk. Stress hormones weaken body immunity system and reduce body response to fight against any viruses. Suicidal thoughts are mainly emerging from high levels of stress.

According to David D. Burns, MD., a clinical psychiatrist anxiety, guilt, pessimism, low self-esteem and other “black holes” of depression can

be cured without drugs. He outlines the remarkable, scientifically proven techniques that will immediately help one to look at positive side of life by uplifting spirit. In his book, *The Feeling Good* proven strategies for treating depression are offered. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) suggested investigating some techniques that address this growing problem of stress response.

During such a pandemic, quarantine can be one the preventive measures. However, it may also be accompanied with psychological distress related to the isolation, fear for loved ones, and fear for contracting the disease. Officials need to ensure that quarantined households have enough supplies for their basic needs. In order to relieve stress quarantined people should also be provided with some stress management support. Similarly, health workers deserve special attention during pandemic of COVID19.

To prevent suicide among vulnerable populations, there should be the adoption of some other techniques such as medical health services that can assuage suicidal ideation. Helplines would require volunteer workforces and evidence-based online interventions to provide mental health interventions during an extended quarantine period. Providing community support for those living alone may be helpful (Gunnel et al., 2020). Research suggests adopting healthy habits may reduce stress. Healthy habits include the consumption of healthy food, periodic exercise, meditation, breathing exercises, and, good sleep. One should consume food that strengthens immune system and offers protection from seasonal illness. According to Elizabeth Anne Scott MS, and Carly Snyder, MD (2020) deep breathing can make mind calm and decline level of stress. Junk foods must be avoided since it contributes to poor mental health and also weakens the immunity system. Exercising boosts level of serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine; therefore, one should download some useful apps to consider which exercises are best for relieving stress. Research has also shown that random acts of kindness bring greater joy to one's life and leads more acts of kindness. According to there are some techniques to relieve stress like: breathing exercise, PMR (Progressive Muscles Relaxation), mini meditation, quick burst of exercise, good laugh.

CONCLUSIONS/ IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, there is an urgent need to bring awareness among people about mental wellness. Individuals should take time to discover the dietary intake and cluster of exercises which best serve their mental wellness needs. As several governments have demonstrated ulterior motives which do not best serve those subjected to the lockdown, individual should also be

circumspect and verify information through various media outlets. Though we should be able to rely on official news releases, people also need to engage correct information for themselves and families in an effort to maintain mental wellness during the pandemic.

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