
COVID-19: Addressing Anxiety Among Healthcare Professionals



The world is currently going through a major healthcare crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected people across different continents, races, and socioeconomic groups. Communities are quarantined, schools are closed, people are in social isolation. All these factors have literally changed our life.

But our healthcare workers are out there, battling this war and risking their lives every day. All around the globe, the rapid spread of COVID-19 and the severity of symptoms in critically ill patients has taxed the limits of most health care systems. And in the midst of this crisis, maintaining a healthcare workforce that is physically and mentally healthy is most important. At this point in time, we need our physicians, nurses, advanced practice clinicians, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, and other clinicians, and we need to ensure all of them are healthy and well to be able to take care of patients. But is it that easy?

Healthcare workers are facing incredible challenges and are continuously engaged in providing patient care. At the same time, they are coping with emotional stressors, societal pressure, risk of exposure, an immense workload, moral challenges, and dilemmas, and a healthcare situation that is changing rapidly. Some healthcare workers may be anxious and afraid, and this anxiety and fear are completely understandable.

Listening sessions with physicians, nurses, advanced practice clinicians, residents, and fellows were conducted to explore three key concerns: what are the issues healthcare workers are most concerned about? What do they need from their leaders? What other sources of support do they believe could be most helpful to them? The discussions centred around eight sources of anxiety: accept to personal protective equipment, being exposed to COVID-19 at the workplace and taking this infection home; not having rapid access to testing in case they develop symptoms; uncertainty that their organisation would support and take of their family needs in case they develop an infection; access to childcare during work hours and school closures; support for other personal and family needs; being able to provide adequate care if deployed to a new area; and lack of access to up-to-date information and communication.

These sources of anxiety are not applicable to everyone, nor are they affecting everyone, but they are certainly important enough to be discussed. By recognising these stressors, healthcare leaders and organisations can develop targeted approaches to address these concerns and provide additional support to their healthcare workers. In a way, these eight concerns can be organised into five core requests from healthcare workers: hear me, protect me, prepare me, support me, and care for me.

Healthcare workers deserve visible leadership during this time of crisis. They don't expect answers, but they need leaders who are willing to ask, "What do you need?" And who are willing to make an effort to address those needs. Healthcare workers are at the forefront of this crisis, and they realize and understand that healthcare leaders cannot provide everything they ask for, but just asking, listening and acknowledging can go a long way in reducing the stress and anxiety of healthcare workers.

At this point in time, healthcare workers are our warriors, and they are doing a great job. A little gratitude and a little recognition can go a long way in giving them the motivation to continue. We need to honour them and respect them for their courage and their bravery. We need to ensure people in a position of leadership continue to hear, protect, prepares support, and care for all our healthcare workers around the globe.

Source: [JAMA](#)

Image Credit: iStock

