

As pandemic enters year 2, mental health burden becomes clearer

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Nearly four in 10 Americans say that worry and stress related to the threat of COVID-19 has played a negative role in their mental health, according to a health tracking poll from Kaiser Family Foundation. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a disparate impact on mental health across the country, intensifying the need for access to treatment.

Additionally, one in three patients with COVID-19 are diagnosed with a psychiatric or neurological condition within six months, according to a recent study in *The Lancet Psychiatry*. These COVID long-hauler symptoms are mostly mood disorders but also include strokes and dementia. One in eight patients were also diagnosed with a mental health condition such as anxiety or depression for the first time. And while people with very severe COVID-19 had a higher risk of complications of stroke or dementia, people who developed anxiety or depression spanned the spectrum of illness severity.

While mental health is a growing concern, recent data suggests that the number of suicides decreased in the U.S. last year, according to a *JAMA* viewpoint article. In 2020, suicides totaled fewer than 45,000, which is down from about 47,500 in 2019 and more than 48,000 in 2018.

There is still a lot of uncertainty associated with COVID-19, which creates a great deal of anxiety and fear for everyone. But as physicians and other health professionals continue to navigate the pandemic, here are some resources for patients and physicians about COVID-19's impact on mental health.

Experience of pandemic fatigue

A year into the pandemic, people are fed up with the “new normal” routines. They are

experiencing a type of burnout that experts are calling COVID-19 fatigue, which can lead to careless behaviors and a sharp rise in cases. Learn how to handle this phenomenon.

Feeling pandemic anger

For people who have not seen their families and friends in the flesh for months or skipped traveling to stay safe during the pandemic, it's easy to get angry when others don't seem to do their part to limit the spread of COVID-19. To describe this feeling of "pandemic angry," people have coined the portmanteau "pangry." Find out how to manage this common feeling.

Losing sleep due to coronasomnia

Physicians and researchers are seeing signs that the pandemic is also causing damage to people's sleep. This disruption is due to increased stress and anxiety, leading to what some sleep experts are calling "coronasomnia." If this is not addressed, coronasomnia could prove to have profound public health ramifications, including elevated risks for high blood pressure, depression and other health issues long after the pandemic has ended.

Treating pandemic anxiety requires a team effort

Mental and behavioral health services were already tough for many Americans to access before the pandemic hit the United States, with six in 10 people not receiving care they need. COVID-19 has put even more stress and strain on people and made access to this care more important than ever.

How to protect Black patients' mental health

As Black communities continue to process layers of individual trauma on top of trauma caused by COVID-19 and police brutality in the country, there are ways to responsibly manage mental health. Here are some tips to share with your Black patients to protect their mental health.

In an episode of the "AMA COVID-19 Update," Immediate Past President Patrice A. Harris, MD, MA, discusses the pandemic's impact on the mental health of children and teens.

Resources are also available from the AMA to help physicians manage their own mental health and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. The AMA also provides practical strategies for health system leadership to consider



in support of their physicians and care teams during COVID-19.