

Analysis of the impact of healthcare providers' mental health on patient care

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ABSTRACT

Background: There is a growing evidence of increased prevalence of mental health problems among medical professionals all over the world and this has been shown to be associated with lapses in patient care. Data from India in this regard are limited. **Objective:** This hospital-based study aimed to study the mental health status in healthcare providers (Nursing Services) and to suggest the measure to improve the same. **Materials and Methods:** A total number of 69 healthcare providers of Nursing Services Pvt Hospital from Uttarakhand, India had enrolled themselves in Questionnaire Survey /Personal Interview and were investigated for a period of 12 weeks (07 November 2023 to 13 January 2024) were considered in this single-center, descriptive, cross-sectional study and non-randomization study conducted at Shridhar University, Pilanichirawa road, Pilani, Rajasthan, India. Inclusion criteria included all healthcare providers from Nursing Services Pvt Hospital from Uttarakhand, India had enrolled themselves in Questionnaire Survey /Personal Interview. Exclusion criteria included subjects aged below 20 years. **Result:** The most gender participated in the study was female with a male to female ratio of 0.38:1. Maximum respondents belonged from the nursing profession. **Conclusion:** The present study suggests that a significantly higher proportion of healthcare providers (Nursing Services) in Indian hospital setting experience mental health issues.

Keywords: mental health, healthcare provider, nurse

INTRODUCTION

The practice of medicine is unique and challenging than any other profession in the world. It is associated not only with a great degree of both personal and professional satisfaction, but also with a high level of occupational stress.¹ Data from studies across the world suggest that healthcare professionals, especially in nursing services are prone to developing mental health issues. Further, it has been shown that occupational stress is often associated with emotional exhaustion, which can lead to the loss of enthusiasm for work, feeling helpless, trapped, and defeated.²

Frequently reported occupational stressors among healthcare professionals, especially in nursing services are those intrinsic to the job, those related to patient demands, feeling overburdened, related to roles within the organization, and those related to relationships at work and career development.³

Existing literature on the psychological problems faced by medical practitioners is limited to few nationwide surveys and some specific hospital surveys. A large national survey of 2584 physicians from Canada showed that both male and female healthcare professionals, especially in nursing services experienced high levels of occupational stress, which was associated with lower levels of satisfaction with their medical practice.⁴

A postal survey involving 524 medical professionals from the United Kingdom reported that about 27% scored in the clinical range of depression.⁵

Similarly, a survey of 50,000 healthcare professionals, especially in nursing services from Australia demonstrated an increased incidence of severe psychological distress along with a 2-fold increased incidence of suicidal ideations compared with the general population.⁶

Very few studies from India have evaluated mental health issues among medical professionals. These studies have been mostly limited to medical students and interns, with few studies focusing on resident doctors.⁷⁻¹⁰ Given limited data over healthcare professionals, especially in nursing services from India and growing mental health problems in the medical fraternity, there is a need to assess mental health issues. Improving the understanding of mental health issues can help in amending the policies.

In view of the above, we sought to study the mental health status in healthcare providers (Nursing Services) and to suggest the measure to improve the same.

METHOD

A total number of 69 healthcare providers of Nursing Services Pvt Hospital from Uttarakhand, India had enrolled themselves in Questionnaire Survey /Personal Interview and were investigated for a period of 12 weeks (07 November 2023 to 13 January 2024) were considered in this single-center, descriptive, cross-sectional study and non-randomization study conducted at Shridhar University, Pilanichirawa road, Pilani, Rajasthan, India. Inclusion criteria included all healthcare providers from Nursing Services Pvt Hospital from Uttarakhand, India had enrolled themselves in Questionnaire Survey /Personal Interview. Exclusion criteria included subjects aged below 20 years.

Statistical Analysis

The data was collected, coded and recorded on Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet program and descriptive statistical analysis was performed. Data analysis was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 23.0).

RESULTS

The most gender participated in the study was female with a male to female ratio of 0.38:1.

Table 1. Tabulation of study variables

Category	Number of cases (n, %)
Number of patients recorded in our study	69 (100%)
Gender of patients recorded in our study	
Male	19 (22%)
Female	50 (78%)
Total	69 (100%)
Ratio of male: female	0.38:1
Professions	
Administration	5
Nursing staff	41
Clinical instructor	2
Clinical researcher	1
Dentistry	2
Doctor	6
Others	12
Self-awareness of mental health among study participants	
Yes	44
No	25
Does study participant feel currently receive mental health counseling or professional assistance	
Yes	5
No	54
May be	7
Does study participant feel at ease bringing up mental health issues at work with your coworkers and managers	
Yes	33
No	36
According to the study participant does mental health situation impact their capacity to deliver high-quality patient care	
Highly impactful	34
Little impactful	20
No impactful	15
Does study participant ever had a medical error or a close call that they think may have been caused by their emotional or mental state	
Yes	16
No	40
May be	13
Has study participant ever seen coworkers' struggles with mental health issues, impair	

patient care at their place of employment	
Yes	55
No	14

Table 2. Measure to improve the mental health status in healthcare providers (Nursing Services)

Measures	Number of cases (n, %)
Do you think healthcare organizations should offer their staff resources or programs for mental health support?	
Yes	64
No	5
In order to improve patient care, how do you believe healthcare organizations can assist the mental health and wellbeing of their staff members?	
Counseling	8
Organizing awareness programs	4
Mental well-being program	10
Implementing Recreational Activities	8
To reduce work load	5
Providing rewards	5
Providing friendly environment	5
Others	24
Do you believe there are enough possibilities for healthcare professionals to practice self-care and stress management at work?	
Yes	54
No	15
Have you ever taken part in a programme or initiative your healthcare facility offers to improve mental health?	
Yes	35
No	34
If so, did you discover that using these programmes to manage your mental health and wellbeing was beneficial?	
Yes	49
No	4
Not applicable	6

DISCUSSION

Studies evaluating the work-related stress, depression, and burnout among medical professionals from India are very few in number.¹¹⁻¹⁴ Every other day, there are news highlights about the lapses done by the doctors in the patient care and violence against doctors. However, there has been very little effort to understand the factors associated with the same.

The medical professionals are expected to provide the best quality care to all the patients. Besides providing patient care, the professionals are also expected to excel in the field of academics and research. Keeping this working environment in mind, the present survey was conducted to evaluate the psychological problems faced by medical professionals (both resident doctors and faculty) in this tertiary care hospital.¹⁵

Findings of the present study lend support to the existing literature, which have also reported higher rates of stress and burnout among various medical professionals including medical students and have reported high rates of perceived stress and burnout in them.¹⁶ These studies linked stress with academics as well as psychosocial factors as the potential stressors.¹⁷ Studies which have evaluated stress among medical professionals suggest that stress adversely affects the work efficiency of junior doctors during their postgraduate residency training programs and leads to absence from duty days, inefficient day activities, and general health problems.¹⁸⁻²⁰ Although the present study did not evaluate all these outcomes, it does show that higher levels of stress are associated with negative doctor-patient interactions.

The small number of patients and single-center nature of this study are the major limitations. Hence, to endorse our findings, we recommend conducting appropriately designed prospective studies in our setting in the future.

CONCLUSION

The present study suggests that a significantly higher proportion of healthcare providers (Nursing Services) in Indian hospital setting experience mental health issues. The presence of mental health could be due to several factors mentioned and negative patient-related outcomes. These findings suggest that there is an urgent need to develop mechanisms to evaluate the occupational stress and address the same. At the same time, there is a need to equip the medical professionals with skills of stress management and mitigate stigma associated with mental disorders so that at the time of the need, the professionals can seek help. Additionally, at the institute level, there must be screening of professional's mental health at the regular level and there must be provision for conducting regular stress management workshops.

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Conflict of interest: None declared

Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

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