


Chapter 10

Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the Well-Being of Healthcare Workers in a South African Haemodialysis Facility

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to determine the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the well-being of clinical haemodialysis healthcare workers of an organization specializing in renal care and dialysis. This qualitative study made use of purposive sampling. Online semi-structured with in-depth interviews were conducted with nine clinical haemodialysis healthcare workers from a private dialysis facility. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that well-being was negatively impacted during the pandemic due to the fear of infecting others with the virus. This affected all aspects of their lives from the workplace to personal life, and to their community and religious/spiritual beliefs. Social distancing and the nature of their job deprived participants of social and emotional support. Some of the stress factors to wellbeing were stigmatization, isolation, lack of recognition, and inadequate availability of resources (e.g., safe transportation, training, and shortage of staff).

1. INTRODUCTION

Fear and panic spread as the Coronavirus, identified as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), rapidly spread globally. Never has a pandemic of such a magnitude been experienced where, globally, the economy came to a complete halt as saving lives took priority. No country or race

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was spared from its volatility as many lives were lost and healthcare systems were put under severe strain, even the most financed and developed healthcare systems like in Switzerland and the United States of America were challenged (Sebola-Samanyanga, 2021).

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the wellbeing of the clinical haemodialysis healthcare workers of a non-government (private) medical practice specialising in renal care and dialysis.

2. BACKGROUND

Healthcare workers were encouraged during the pandemic to find a balance and get sufficient rest during shifts, eat healthily, keep in contact with family and friends, and avoid unhealthy coping mechanisms (WHO, 2021). Situations in the workplace can be work stressors as they relate to the psychological and social conditions of the workplace (Burton, 2010). Feelings of stress, fear and feeling under pressure were normal and not a reflection of the healthcare workers not doing their jobs (WHO, 2020).

The majority of chronic treatment for patients could be delivered to their homes or consultations done online during COVID-19 to avoid physical contact, however, chronic haemodialysis treatment still required face-to-face contact in a dialysis facility where the risk of being infected increased due to shared spaces and exposure during transport. Dialysis patients were considered at increased risk of becoming infected with the COVID-19 virus owing to their pre-existing medical conditions of diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease, which are the main causes of kidney failure (Keaveney et al., 2021).

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

During a crisis such as COVID-19, healthcare workers may neglect themselves and their own wellbeing as they try to save lives and re-assure patients, family, and the community. The study is important in bringing attention to the challenges faced specifically by South African healthcare workers in a haemodialysis outpatient facility, which is an important yet under-studied field in the enormous healthcare system. In a healthcare system that incorporates a variety of healthcare professionals, each responsible for different treatments and patient care, studies on the impact of COVID-19 on the outpatient dialysis healthcare workers is lacking, even though they were also at high risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus. Healthcare workers also faced isolation from family and friends due to stigma and fear, which adds to their stress. Similarly, healthcare workers from outpatient haemodialysis facilities were also exposed to work stressors due to COVID-19, affecting both their physical and mental wellbeing negatively.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature focuses on the types of wellbeing, South Africa's preparedness during the pandemic, risks that healthcare workers and dialysis healthcare workers experienced and protective factors to support them. The ERG theory to explain the risk factors and Maslow's theory to discuss protective factors are also discussed.

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