

# More mental health support needed for frontline workers tackling COVID, study reveals

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More support needs to be put in place for hospital workers dealing with the COVID pandemic after a global review of studies found high levels

of depression, PTSD, anxiety and burn-out amongst frontline staff.

The [review](#), conducted by the University of York and the Mental Health Foundation, also revealed that COVID-19 patients with other physical health problems, and children and adolescents are struggling with a host of mental health issues during the [pandemic](#).

The study looked at 25 systematic reviews conducted during the early months of the pandemic. Many of these studies were of [hospital workers](#) in China.

Estimates varied from 12 percent for anxiety in one review of [healthcare workers](#) in hospital, to 51 percent for depression and PTSD in another review.

For children, changes in household interactions and social changes such as school closures may increase the risk of adverse mental health outcomes.

The review was a collaboration between the University of York's Centre for Reviews and Dissemination and the Mental Health Foundation. In addition, a panel of six UK healthcare workers helped the researchers to interpret findings of the review.

Based on feedback from the panel, the study authors highlight a lack of responsibility from the UK government to support healthcare workers, pointing out a need for tangible support more so than orchestrated initiatives such as "Clap for Carers."

The panel confirmed review findings on the importance of support from colleagues, clear communication in the workplace, and the need for resources and support for a shift to working from home for community workers.

Lead author Noortje Uphoff, a research Fellow at the University of York's Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, said additional support during outbreaks such as the COVID-19 pandemic could prevent an increased burden of mental health problems in the population.

She said, "Many people worldwide have felt the impact of the COVID pandemic on their mental health, but some groups of people may be more at risk of experiencing poor mental health than others."

"Healthcare workers may already have a higher risk of adverse mental health outcomes due to the stressful nature of their work. However, there were some indications that mental health may be further affected as a result of working on the frontline during an infectious disease outbreak.

"This review indicates which types of support should be explored to protect the mental [health](#) of healthcare workers and other vulnerable groups during this pandemic and any future coronavirus outbreaks."

Dr. Antonis Kousoulis, Director at the Mental Health Foundation, said, "Much has been said about the impact of the pandemic on healthcare workers. However, our novel partnership approach to complete this review brought a range of unique perspectives to the project. Our team consisted of researchers and workers with academic, third sector, clinical and lived experience, thus supporting the idea that research can be more meaningful if inclusive.

"Our research highlighted some stark differences between different frontline workers that were not apparent in other studies, such as community workers experiencing more stress due to feeling more isolated, not having a clear structure or sense of control, and feeling as though they were not supported enough in the pandemic."

The study is a result of a multi-year strategic partnership between the

Mental Health Foundation (which funded this study) and Cochrane Common Mental Disorders with the aim of bringing more accessible evidence to policy and practice. The study is published in the journal *PLOS ONE*.

**More information:** Eleonora P. Uphoff et al, Mental health among healthcare workers and other vulnerable groups during the COVID-19 pandemic and other coronavirus outbreaks: A rapid systematic review, *PLOS ONE* (2021). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0254821](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0254821)

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