

COVID-19 has changed how primary care teams work; understanding the impact is important

January 26 2022



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Researchers sought to understand the strategies that clinical and administrative staff at primary care practices use to manage challenges faced by the primary care workforce under strain by an ongoing state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding the impact of the pandemic on health care providers could potentially allow health organizations to support workforce well-being, prevent burnout and sustain the quality of patient care.

Researchers conducted short, semi-structured, qualitative interviews among 33 [staff](#) members from eight practices within a single health care system. Participants said that they had to adapt every aspect of [primary care](#) service delivery for COVID-19—such as patient scheduling, switching to telehealth visits and increased sanitation responsibilities—which significantly increased their job demands. New skill development opportunities and sense of purpose during this period increased a sense of pride in some staff members, and most teams reported greater support and patience within their practices. Participants also learned to reframe their responsibilities as a necessity during the pandemic. Management support also helped. However, as the pandemic continued, staff reported that they experienced more feelings of burnout.

Participants' perceptions of the pandemic's effect on their jobs, demands of those jobs, sense of control over their responsibilities and support they received are factors other health care system officials can examine to improve staff engagement and wellness.

More information: Erin L. Kelly et al, Burnout and Commitment to

Primary Care: Lessons From the Early Impacts of COVID-19 on the Workplace Stress of Primary Care Practice Teams, *The Annals of Family Medicine* (2022). [DOI: 10.1370/afm.2775](https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2775)

Provided by American Academy of Family Physicians

Citation: COVID-19 has changed how primary care teams work; understanding the impact is important (2022, January 26) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-01-covid-primary-teams-impact-important.html>

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