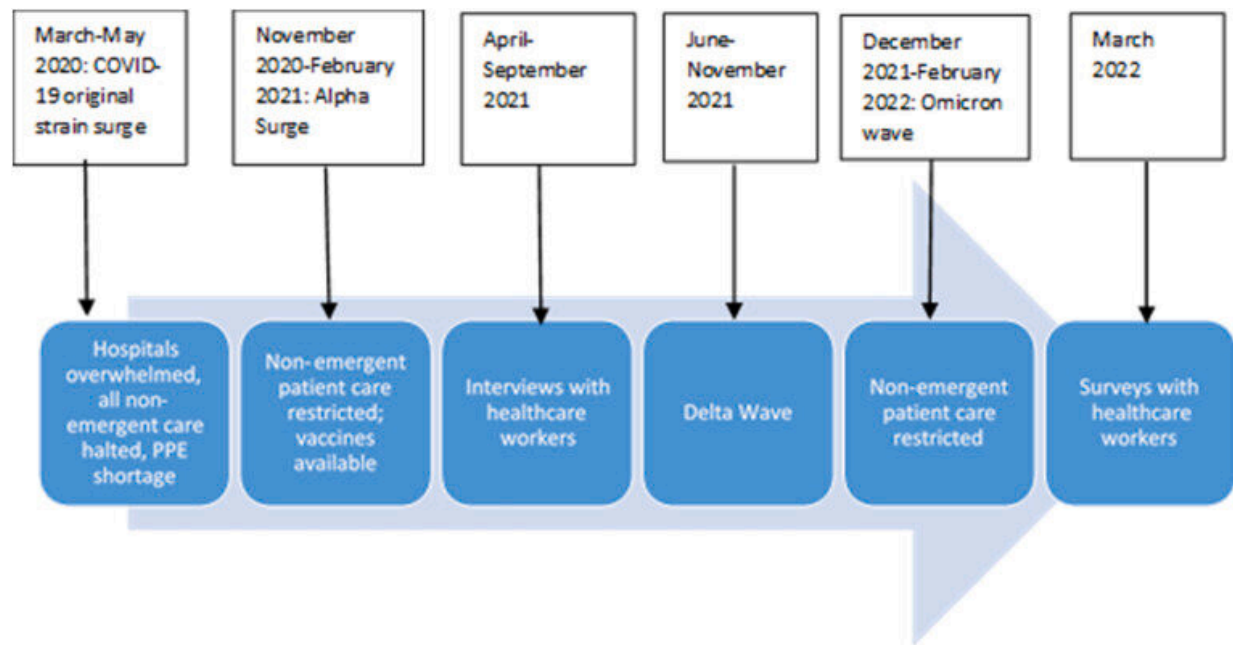


# COVID-19 pandemic responsible for high rates of burnout among health care workers

June 13 2023



Timeline of COVID-19 in Massachusetts and research study events. Credit: *Journal of Interprofessional Education & Practice* (2023). DOI: 10.1016/j.xjep.2023.100661

The COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on the mental health of health care workers across the world. Most reported increased levels of stress and anxiety early in the pandemic from constant exposure to patient deaths and later from increased health care demands due to worsening of chronic conditions like diabetes. Health care workers also shared that

their mental health and that of family members had worsened since the start of the pandemic.

A new Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine study quantified the results of those impacts finding that [health care](#) workers in Massachusetts experienced high levels of burnout with nearly 40% planning to leave health care within five years, while nearly one third of those under age 35 intending to do so within two years. Nearly 80% felt that lack of workplace support contributed to burnout and also cited staffing shortages leaving them unable to provide the best care for patients.

"These findings highlight the far-reaching impact of the COVID-19 pandemic," said corresponding author Rebecca Perkins, MD, professor of obstetrics & gynecology at the School. "Staffing shortages prevent health care workers from taking the best care of their patients, leading to moral injury. Bringing health care leadership and frontline workers together is essential if we are to solve this problem."

The researchers conducted interviews with Massachusetts health care workers focused on their experience with COVID-19 vaccines and the impact that the pandemic had on their work in health care. They also asked health care workers to complete a survey on their mental health including any issues that continued to worsen even as the pandemic eased. Surveys also addressed the issue of burnout at work what could be done to improve those feelings including support that would reduce the desire to leave health care.

According to the researchers, for health care workers to provide the best care to patients they need to feel invested, valued and supported. "The [mental health](#) of your doctor, nurse etc. impacts the quality of care they can provide. Reductions in health care staff will negatively impact the patient experience and the quality of care that patients receive," adds

Perkins, who also is an obstetrician & gynecologist at Boston Medical Center.

Health care professionals need the tools and support necessary to provide the best care for patients. This includes basic materials like [personal protective equipment](#), sufficient supplies of clean, sterilized [surgical instruments](#), updated equipment, adequate infrastructure and, perhaps most importantly in light of the exodus of health care workers, appropriate levels of staffing and clinical support to provide high-quality, compassionate care.

These findings appear in the *Journal of Interprofessional Education & Practice*.

**More information:** Shana A.B. Burrowes et al, COVID-19 pandemic impacts on mental health, burnout, and longevity in the workplace among healthcare workers: A mixed methods study, *Journal of Interprofessional Education & Practice* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.xjep.2023.100661](#)

Provided by Boston University School of Medicine

Citation: COVID-19 pandemic responsible for high rates of burnout among health care workers (2023, June 13) retrieved 21 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-06-covid-pandemic-responsible-high-burnout.html>

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