

EPV0482

An exploratory qualitative study describing frontline nurses' experiences with Presenteeism due to the COVID-19 pandemic

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doi: 10.1192/j.eurpsy.2022.1325

Introduction: The COVID-19 pandemic will have a long-lasting impact on healthcare workplaces and professionals alike. For that reason, it is necessary more knowledge and insights about sickness presenteeism behaviour to provide appropriate occupational health services for all healthcare workers affected directly and indirectly by this pandemic.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to explore and describe presenteeism experiences among frontline nurses due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods: A qualitative thematic analysis was used to evaluate the perceptions of frontline nurses from different Portuguese hospital institutions joined in two Focus Groups. Using convenience sampling a total of 20 RNs participated in interviews. No restriction was given to their gender, age, career, and wards in charge so as to obtain diverse data on nurses' experiences of presenteeism.

Results: The sample mean age was 36 years [range 25 - 42 years]; they had a clinical career of 12 years on average [range 2 - 20 years]. The major theme was the metaphor of "the rotten orange". This theme implied the presence of a phenomenon that is invisible due to the ignorance of many, but which spreads through the members of a team, leading to an overload of its members for lack of one compassionate leadership. Consequently, leads to loss of the nursing spirit and nursing manpower.

Conclusions: Our findings point to the development of workplace interventions targets to reduce healthcare worker presenteeism and to help employers foster a 'healthier' sickness culture during the pandemic and beyond.

Disclosure: No significant relationships.

Keywords: Pandemics; Workplace; Nurses; presenteeism

EPV0480

COVID-19 Psychiatric Inpatient Unit- experience and challenges

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doi: 10.1192/j.eurpsy.2022.1326

Introduction: On January 2021 the Department of Psychiatry became the only unit exclusively dedicated to COVID patients with severe mental illness in acute decompensation. Only patients in risk of rapid medical deterioration were excluded and forwarded to intensive care.

Objectives: Discussion of this unprecedented experience.

Methods: Analysis of 28 patients hospitalized during 3 months with both an acute psychiatric disorder and an SARS-CoV-2 infection; description of the multidisciplinary intervention made.

Results: Our sample was characterized by a majority of patients with an acute psychotic episode derived from a schizophrenia spectrum disorder (42%) or a bipolar affective disorder (21%). Only 3% of the patients had a diagnosis of severe major depressive disorder. And 10% of patients developed severe respiratory symptoms requiring oxygen or urgent transfer to COVID medical wards. Most patients presented periods of psychomotor agitation, lack of impulse control and self-aggression. Psychopharmacological and psychotherapeutic interventions had to be adapted to these unusual conditions. Most of them had already gone through a period of isolation in the buffer ward created to exclude false negatives, which promoted atypical deliriums and symptoms of post-traumatic stress. The psychiatric team was faced with the emergent need to adapt an intervention model based on trust to a model that had to prioritize physical safety.

Conclusions: The pandemic experience was transformative for all who lived through it. From the challenge perspective, it may have been enriching. But the maintained confrontation with the antithesis of therapy, defined by "caring, supporting, communicating, approaching", was devastating in ways that we consider essential to be debated.

Disclosure: No significant relationships.

Keywords: Covid-19; bipolar disorder; Psychiatric Inpatient Unit; Psychotic disorder

EPV0482

How did the Covid-19 Pandemic Impact the Life of Patients with Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders?

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doi: 10.1192/j.eurpsy.2022.1327

Introduction: Since the first outbreak, the Covid-19 pandemic has had and still has several implications worldwide, particularly in severe mentally ill patients, leading to multiple challenges in their management.

Objectives: We aim to assess the impact and implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on patients with Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders (SSD) and the treatment recommendations available.

Methods: We conduct an integrative review using PubMed database. Search terms included: "psychosis" AND "COVID-19 pandemic", "schizophrenia and COVID-19", "severe mental illness" AND "COVID-19". The search period was between 1st January 2020 and 31th July 2021.

Results: Studies postulated that people with SSD are at a higher risk of COVID-19 infection with a poorer medical and social outcome which is attributed to factors such as higher rates of disadvantageous lifestyle behaviours, medical comorbidities, antipsychotic medication metabolic effects, psychosocial adversities, smaller social networks and poor engagement with general health services. The Covid-19 pandemic also demanded adjustments in treatment guidelines and monitoring, particularly in patients with SSD on Clozapine. Many studies address the importance of psychiatric care and treatment during the pandemic. They emphasize rapid implementation of measures to decrease the risk of COVID-19 transmission and maintain continuity care and research. An individualized and flexible approach is needed to promote safety of SSD patients.