

## **Healthcare Workers at Risk of Burnout**

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New York's health and social services personnel represent one of the most vulnerable populations in the United States, in terms of COVID-19 pandemic. The high risk of exposure to the infection is compounded by the physical and emotional strains of a burdened and undermanaged healthcare system. There is also the chance that healthcare workers staying active during the pandemic increase the possibility of family members contracting the disease. After long and tiresome shifts, medical personnel, including Occupational Therapists Registered (OTR) and Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs), go back home to rest and to take care of themselves and their families. Thus, they are putting their lives and those of their families at increased risk while serving and saving the public. Psychological and physical strain is bound to be the subsequent crisis for frontline healthcare workers in the final stages of the current epidemic.

The US healthcare sector is a stressful workplace with physical demands superseding its operational capacity. According to an interview conducted by Lufkin (2020), psychologists assert that present-day burnout occurs due to different reasons termed as "decision fatigue". Therapists are faced with the challenges of limited resources and high patient demands. Every day, they have to make critical decisions on how to structure resource distribution to cater for the most critical of cases. There is also a chance of high physical fatigue. Nurses, physicians, and other caregivers are going beyond the working hours to effect a global reaction to the outbreak (Lagasse, 2020). They are forced to work long shifts wearing heavy protective gear, which is likely to be hot and irritating. An ineffective and overburdened healthcare delivery system will physically overwhelm the majority of occupational therapists in the New York metropolitan area.

Therapists and other healthcare personnel working during the viral outbreak are subject to dealing with sustained trauma. Despite being exhausted, OTRs and COTAs are coping with multiple horrific tragedies occurring daily (Mock, 2020). Coughing and sweating patients are streaming in every day. Moreover, everyone is anticipative of efficient medical responses. As a result, healthcare workers are taking in accumulative emotional tolls. Psychological stress can create a second class of victims among health and social workers. The recurrent high-stress situations and a demanding job can amplify underlying psychological issues in mental counselors. Given that the pandemic is new and unprecedented, ground circumstances can rock the stability of individual professionals. The problem is getting more serious due to the fact that some of the OTRs and COTAs are parents and have to return home to their young children, who have no idea about the abnormality of the current events.

Unfortunately, occupational therapists and other medical and social service employees are bound to experience the worst of scenarios associated with the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. The healthcare system is almost reaching its breaking point. Frontline personnel are subject to more meetings, patient visits, working hours, and collapsing policies. To make matters worse, some of the workers cannot rest and seek solace in their homes sufficiently because they are parents with dependent families. The absurd frequency and duration of medical work are likely to cause post-traumatic stress disorders for public health mental counselors. OTRs should be allowed time and space to reflect on their life situations, as a function of improving their ability to take care of themselves and their families. Peer support should also be increased to improve workload and stress management.

## References

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