

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Depression Symptoms among Medical Doctors of the First Line

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: During the two years of COVID-19 pandemics the medical staff has been under enormous physical and mental pressures. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the healthcare staff's mental health like depression and also to investigate the issues and the associated predictors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods: A face-to-face interview with a questionnaire survey was conducted by 320 medical doctors for three months of 2021 (October to December). Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ9) score system was used to measure depression among medical doctors. This was a descriptive cross-sectional study and all statistical analyses were done using SPSS version 20.0. P-values less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

Results: Almost 17.5 % (56/320) of medical doctors surpassed the cutoff for depression. Females were the most predominant 56% (31/56) gender affected by symptoms of depression compared to males 44% (25/56). There was found a significant association between the symptoms of depression and gender. Females were 2.2 times at risk to develop depression caused by pandemic situations compared to males for 95% CI [1.11 to 5.08], p-value =0.005. The age less than 35 years old and more than 50 years old were significant predictors of mental health issues. Also, the risk of being infected with the virus, shortage of equipment such as PPE, tremendous workloads, and fear of familiar infected are seen as the most predominant issues in this study with a significant association with depression. The majority of the medical doctors were 73.2% in mild depression and 26.8% in moderate to severe symptoms of depression.

Conclusion: Frontline young female medical doctors reported a high rate of depression symptoms. Identifying and evaluating mental health issues can guide stakeholders and healthcare organizations to screen healthcare workers who are more likely to be mentally vulnerable in the ongoing pandemic situations. On the other hand, further studies need to be conducted on crisis management and depression.

Keywords: Medical doctors' staff, Depression, COVID-19 pandemic situation, Albania

Abbreviations: PHQ9: Patient Health Questionnaire-9

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