

Psychological support and the COVID-19 – A short report

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Abstract. – OBJECTIVE: The World Health Organization reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected on December 31, 2019 in China. Unfortunately, a 34-year-old Italian nurse has committed suicide after testing positive for coronavirus. It was the second case of suicide by a nurse in an Italian hospital and occurred only a few days after the first suicide. These consecutive suicides have aroused concern, and it is necessary to investigate the psychological issues of the medical staff in Italy regarding the COVID-19.

Key Words:

Psychological support, COVID-19, Suicide.

Introduction

Short Report

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in China on December 31, 2019¹. Unfortunately, a 34-year-old Italian nurse has committed suicide after testing positive for coronavirus. It was the second case of suicide by a nurse in an Italian hospital and occurred only a few days after the first suicide. These consecutive suicides have aroused concern, and it is necessary to investigate the psychological issues of the medical staff in Italy regarding the current COVID-19 epidemic. It is firstly important to outline the current situation in Italy. As of March 31th, the number of people infected with COVID-19 in Italy was 101739, of which 11591 people died¹.

The following analysis is based on the present situation in Italy and the progression of the development of the epidemic in China. First, the COVID-19 has been a sharp increase in the number of outpatients and hospitalized patients in Italy. Hospitals are therefore running short on medical supplies. These conditions could lead to a great deal of psychological pressure that could result in the psychological imbalance of the medical staff, and ultimately to suicide. At the early stages of the epidemic in Wuhan, the local medical staff experienced similar psychological duress.

Second, it is believed that the current available psychological assistance for the medical staff and patients in Italy is not sufficient. When the epidemic first broke out in Wuhan, a large group of medical personnel rushed to Hubei Province to provide assistance². There were psychologists in every medical team who provided vital and powerful psychological support to both the medical staff and infected patients³.

Finally, feelings of helplessness can be a key cause of suicide. Therefore, to address this factor, the government should actively publicize positive content and show concern for frontline medical staff and their families. Medical personnel should also be instilled with a sense of honor and responsibility. In the case of the COVID-19 epidemic in China, the Chinese government has given active support to frontline medical staff⁴.

Therefore, we are calling for medical personnel in Italy and other countries to be given stronger psychological support in the face of the current

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COVID-19 epidemic. The fight against this epidemic is not a problem for anyone country but it is a severe issue for the whole world. We therefore call on the world's psychologists to take active action and participate in the opening and operation of a global psychological support hotline to support the medical personnel fighting against COVID-19.

Conflict of Interest

The Authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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