



**Saudi Arabia experiences of mental health and social care service
provision during the COVID-19 pandemic:
The roles and efforts made by the Primary Mental Health Care
Program in Saudi Arabia**

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**Saudi Arabia experiences of mental health and social care service provision
during the COVID-19 pandemic:
The roles and efforts made by the Primary Mental Health Care Program in Saudi Arabia**

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Introduction:

Corona is considered a pandemic, despite its cruelty and difficulty caused to the world by this virus. Still, this event is viewed as a test for health systems and the extent of its preparation and work to overcome any health slaughter that may occur in the future.

We know that "There is no health without mental health," as declared by the WHO. Therefore, the health system in Saudi Arabia adopted the "WHO mhGAP Plan 2013-2013" since 2016 in the field of primary mental health care (PMHC) through applying "The Innovative Patient Interview Approach (5-steps Model) for providing MH care in PHC".

By the grace of Allah, PMHC services were generalized in the PHC centers in all regions of Saudi Arabia. Utilizing this the "5-steps Model", we have abled to train more than 1,280 doctors and 888 nurses working in more than 1075 PHC centers for providing the primary mental health care services.

Despite the advanced and early health precautions that the Saudi Ministry of Health has made since the beginning of the spread of Corona disease, Corona pandemic has caused a degree of stress, fear, anxiety among specific groups, in particular, the elderly, caregivers, and people with underlying health conditions.

The challenges regard to delivering mental health care:

- Diverting some staff from PHC to other acute and Quarantine services.
- Minimize doctor-patient interviews in the regular clinics.

The innovative solutions have to provide MH care and ensure continuity of services during the outbreak:

- There are various efforts for giving people with mental health needs with the same quality of information regarding COVID-19 awareness and prevention given to all citizens.
- The Innovative Patient Interview Approach (5-steps Model) for providing MH care in PHC has provided mental health services accessible in different applications: clinical, online, and telephone.

- Online services were working for covering the gap of diverting some staff from PHC to other acute and Quarantine services, and even online drug prescribing as needed.
- The PMHC works to promote mental health awareness, prevention of mental disorders, and empower immunity through controlling of reducing the stress effects by education, encouraging positive thinking, respite care, counseling, guidance and support, and early detection and manage mental health patients.
- Access to teletherapy for outpatients already engaged in care to avoid loss of continuity and follow-up and prevent relapses.
- Personal support and home and educational assistance services such as online interactive activities, video clips, and educational flyers have been developed for serving the community and health staff.
- As an Immediate consequence of Quarantine Measures during Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreaks, certain people have mental health Impacts. Therefore, Mental health support was provided by experts, Family doctors, social workers, psychologists for the isolated groups.
- After detecting MH patients among the quarantine measures, an arrangement is carried for sustainable PMHC in their PHC centers.
- A collaboration between PMHC program works and the MH specialists in hospitals through consultation and referral system for the psychotic or severe MH ill patients.
- Provide mental health support for health workers.
- Involving communities by helping the general population to deal with distress, anxiety, uncertainty, and sadness caused by the epidemic or pre-existing through cooperation and participation in the activities of civil society institutions
- Support volunteer people to have a role in mental health support.
- Ensure that information on pandemic and preventative measures to mental health care users are appropriately addressed.

Researches in during Corona outbreak:

An exciting team runs research on PMHC titled *"Mental Health Impact of Quarantine Measures During Coronavirus Outbreaks in the Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia."*

Aim:

To explore the common mental health problems, depression, and anxiety, the impact of quarantine measures during acute coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreaks in the Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia."

Objectives:

1. To estimate the prevalence of depression and anxiety among the people involved in the quarantine measures during coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreaks
2. To provide early interventional management for the severe discovered cases for a better outcome.

4. The lessons learned would we share?

- a. Providing nationwide coordinated mental health services and collaboration with local decision-makers and all stakeholders is a crucial issue.
- b. It is observed that the mental health of those with pre-existing and managed cases of depression and or anxiety among health staff is not worsening during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- c. Ensure mental health care and psychological support are to continue for people with pre-existed mental health problems.
- d. Continue training for mental health staff in the stress, anxiety, and depression management of emergency and especially preventive measures;
- e. Application of an effective and efficient approach such as the "Innovative Patient Interview Approach (5-steps Model)" for providing MH care in PHC is an essential issue for any Health System.

5. Examples of format (pdf and video clips) could be helpful for others.

- The Innovative Patient Interview Approach (5-steps Model) for providing MH care in PHC:
English: <https://youtu.be/IAg9tV4uGKI>
Arabic: <https://youtu.be/3FXDvLrzEsl>

- Healthy directions for families in the Corona pandemic
توجيهات صحية للأسر في جائحة كورونا: <https://youtu.be/UQk-9D33GBs>

- Psychological pressures and their impact on immunity and control of chronic diseases
الضغوط النفسية وتأثيرها على المناعة والتحكم بالأمراض المزمنة: <https://youtu.be/H-tBka7QK-0>

- Team leadership skills without psychological pressure
مهارات قيادة فريق العمل بدون ضغوط نفسية: <https://youtu.be/-OjEsuMMuEE>

- The effect of exposure to stress

تأثير التعرض للضغوط النفسية: [file:///C:/Users/HP/Downloads/Stress%20\(3\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/HP/Downloads/Stress%20(3).pdf)