



Impacts of COVID-19 Mitigation on People with Pre-existing Mental Health Conditions

Disclaimer:

This *Quick Response Report* was published on July 9, 2020. Given the rapidly changing nature of the coronavirus pandemic, some of the references included in this report may quickly become out-of-date. We further caution readers that researchers at the Newfoundland & Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research are not experts on infectious diseases and are relaying work produced by others. This report has been produced quickly and it is not exhaustive, nor have the included studies been critically appraised.

Original Inquiry

What are the impacts of COVID-19 mitigation on non-COVID-19 populations with pre-existing mental health conditions?

Summary

- Please note that, for this report, we have included resources that focus on the impact of COVID-19 mitigation on non-COVID-19 populations with pre-existing mental health conditions. We have divided the section on guidance documents into two subsections—one that includes documents that provide guidance exclusively for people with mental health conditions and the other that provides a broader scope by offering guidance for people with both mental health *and* substance use/addictions issues.
- For information on the impact of COVID-19 mitigation specifically on people with addictions and substance use issues, please see our related *COVID-19 Quick Response Report* on the impacts of COVID-19 mitigation on people with pre-existing substance use and addictions issues ([LINK](#)).
- We found a number of guidance documents, many of which focused on the impact of COVID-19 mitigation on changes to service provision, in terms of both mental health professionals and service users. These documents often provided guidance or recommendations on how to adapt to pandemic conditions. We also found one systematic review, and a number of other reviews, primary studies, and expert opinions. These resources tended to either speculate or report on: 1) the psychological or psychosocial impacts of isolation for those with pre-existing mental health conditions and/or 2) the impacts of disruption or changes in service provision for those with pre-existing mental health conditions and their providers. In the final section of the report, we have included some related news articles.

Guidance Documents

Focus on mental health issues

National Institute for Health Research, Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre, Oxford Precision Psychiatry Lab. **COVID-19 & clinical management of mental health issues**. Last updated June 15, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- Contains guidance for clinicians on benzodiazepines and Z-drugs (zopiclone and zolpidem), clozapine treatment, digital technologies and telepsychiatry, end of life care, inpatient wards, lithium treatment and Long-acting injectable (LAI) antipsychotics.

United Nations. **Policy Brief: COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health**. May 13, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Being (Australia). **Many Voices, Many Needs: Consultations with people living with mental health issues at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis**. April 2020. ([LINK](#))

- This report contains three sections: “The first of these covers the consumer survey and is broken down into the key questions which we asked people with lived experience to address. The second section provides an overview of the key insights collected in our discussions with peer workers in New South Wales (NSW) in Australia. Finally, the third section addresses issues raised around NSW Mental Health Act amendments.”

Broader focus on both mental health issues *and* substance use/addictions issues

Ministry of Health, New Zealand. **COVID-19: Mental health and addiction providers**. Last updated June 29, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- This page gives access to three guidance documents: *Guidance for Mental Act processes*, *Mental Health Act information for service users* and *COVID-19 Health and Wellbeing Survey*. These resources are intended to guide service providers and service users about service changes at various alert levels.

Canadian Mental Health Association. **Policy Brief COVID-19 and Mental Health: Heading off an Echo Pandemic**. June 25, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- “The aim of this policy brief on mental health and COVID-19 is to: Raise awareness about gaps in the response to COVID-19 in relation to mental health problems and mental illnesses, including problematic substance use and addictions; Share public policy recommendations that will protect the mental health of all people in Canada, including people with lived experience of mental illness and addictions, both immediately and in the “recovery phase” of COVID-19.”

Inter-Agency Standing Committee. **Guidance: Operational considerations for multi-sectoral mental health and psychosocial support programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic.** June 25, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- See section 2 of this document that “aims to support managers and coordinators of existing programmes for MHPSS in humanitarian settings” and includes a section on the impacts for adult and child MHPSS services users as well as examples of MHPSS service users with increased risks.”

American Psychiatric Association (APA). **Practice guidance for COVID-19.** Updated May 27, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- Includes “guidance released by the Department of Health and Human Services, FDA and at the state level related to COVID-19 to assist psychiatrists with providing mental health and substance use services.”
- Related documents:
 - APA. **Coronavirus and mental health: Taking care of ourselves during infectious disease outbreaks.** February 19, 2020. ([LINK](#))
 - APA. **Guidance on admittance, discharge, of psychiatric patients during COVID-19.** 2020. ([LINK](#))
 - APA. **COVID-19 pandemic guidance document: Opening your practise during COVID-19.** 2020. ([LINK](#))
 - Centre for the Study of Traumatic Stress. **Taking care of patients during the Coronavirus outbreak: A guide for psychiatrists.** 2020. ([LINK](#))

Ontario Ministry of Health. **COVID-19 Guidance: Mental Health and Addictions Service Providers in Community Settings.** May 9, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration SAMHSA (U. S.). **Considerations for the Care and Treatment of Mental and Substance Use Disorders in the COVID-19.** Revised May 7, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Panchal, N. et al. **The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use.** Kaiser Family Foundation. April 21, 2020 ([LINK](#))

World Health Organization (WHO). **Mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak.** March 18, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- Related document:
 - WHO. **Looking after our mental health.** 2020. ([LINK](#))

Systematic Reviews

Vindegaard, N., & Benros, M. (2020). **COVID-19 pandemic and mental health consequences: Systematic review of the current evidence.** Brain, Behavior, and Immunity (in press). May 30, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- “...knowledge on the COVID-19 impact on patients with pre-existing psychiatric disorders is very scarce, and the knowledge of impact from earlier pandemics/epidemics on this group is also very limited.”

Other Review Articles

Sher, S. **The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on suicide rates.** QJM: An International Journal of Medicine. June 30, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Rains, L. et al. **Early impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health care and on people with mental health conditions: framework synthesis of international experiences and responses.** medRxiv preprint. June 17, 2020. ([LINK](#)) **Preprint - not yet peer-reviewed.**

Matheson, B. et al. **Family-based treatment via videoconference: Clinical recommendations for treatment providers during COVID-19 and beyond.** International Journal of Eating Disorders. June 13, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Hossain, M. et al. **Mental health outcomes of quarantine and isolation for infection prevention: A systematic umbrella review of the global evidence.** Epidemiology and Health. June 2, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- “This umbrella review found severe mental health problems among individuals and populations who have undergone quarantine and isolation in different contexts. This evidence necessitates multipronged interventions including policy measures for strengthening mental health services globally and promoting psychosocial wellbeing among high-risk populations.”

Talevi, D. et al. **Mental Health Outcomes of the CoViD-19 Pandemic.** Rivista di Psichiatria. May-June 2020. ([LINK](#))

Dubey, S. et al. **Psychosocial impact of COVID-19.** Diabetes Metab Syndr. May 27, 2020. ([LINK](#))

New South Wales Government, COVID-19 Critical Intelligence Unit. **Rapid Evidence Check: Reducing adverse impacts of people with a lived experience of severe mental health issues during COVID-19.** May 27, 2020. ([LINK](#)) **Brief - not yet peer-reviewed, not endorsed by NSW Health, not substitute for clinical evidence.**

- “Expert opinion is that COVID-19 will adversely and disproportionately impact people with a lived experience of mental health issues, and if infected, they will have poorer outcomes.”

Mukherjee, A. et al. **COVID-19 pandemic: Mental health and beyond - The Indian perspective.** Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine. May 21, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Haider, I. et al. **Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on adult mental health.** Pak J Med Sci. May 19, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Brown, et al. **The potential impact of COVID-19 on psychosis: A rapid review of contemporary epidemic and pandemic research.** Schizophrenia Research. May 6, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- “...patients with existing psychosis may be less likely to comply with physical distancing and personal hygiene requirements required during an outbreak of an infectious disease, representing a potential risk to the community and mental health clinicians.”

Kozloff et al. **The COVID-19 global pandemic- implications for people with schizophrenia and related disorders.** Oxford University Press Schizophrenia Bulletin. April 28, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Kannarkat et al. **Mobilization of telepsychiatry in response to COVID-19 – moving towards 21st century access to care.** Nature. April 24, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Chevance, A. et al. **Ensuring Mental Health Care during the SARS-CoV-2 Epidemic in France: A Narrative Review.** April 22, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- “We identified four types of major vulnerabilities among patients with mental disorders during this pandemic: (1) medical comorbidities that are more frequently found among patients with mental disorders (cardiovascular and pulmonary pathologies, diabetes, obesity, etc.) which are risk factors for severe covid-19 infection; (2) age (the elderly form the population most vulnerable to the coronavirus); (3) cognitive and behavioural disorders, which can hamper compliance with confinement and hygiene measures and finally and (4) psychosocial vulnerability as a result of stigmatization and/or socio-economic difficulties.”

Holmes, E.A. et al. **Multidisciplinary research priorities for the COVID-19 pandemic: a call for action for mental health science.** Lancet Psychiatry. April 15, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- Related Document:
 - MQ: Transforming Mental Health and the Academy of Medical Sciences. **Survey results: Understanding people’s concerns about the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.** April 2020. ([LINK](#))

Rajkumar, R.P. **COVID-19 and mental health: A review of the existing literature.** Asian J Psychiatr. April 10, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- “...patients with pre-existing mental disorders may be at higher risk of relapse or new episodes of their disorder due to the stress associated with the COVID-19 outbreak. During this period, it is crucial that psychiatrists familiarize themselves with screening and triage procedures, and work closely with physicians and public health specialists to minimize the risks that their patients face.”

Xiang, Y. et al. **The COVID-19 Outbreak and Psychiatric Hospitals in China: Managing Challenges Through Mental Health Service Reform.** March 15, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Brooks, S. The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence. The Lancet. March 14, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Primary Research

González-Sanguino, C. et al. **Mental health consequences during the initial stage of the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) in Spain.** Brain, Behavior, and Immunity. July 1, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Canadian Mental Health Association et al. **COVID-19 effects on the mental health of vulnerable populations.** June 24, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- “Nationwide survey on the mental health impacts of COVID-19, released today by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in partnership with UBC researchers” ...“everyone is affected – but not everyone is affected equally” ...“18% of people already struggling with their mental health have had suicidal thoughts since the outbreak of COVID-19”

Johnson, S. et al. **Impact on mental health care and on mental health service users of the COVID-19 pandemic: a mixed methods survey of UK mental health care staff.** June 22, 2020. medRxiv preprint. ([LINK](#)) **Preprint -not peer-reviewed.**

Kwong, A. et al. **Mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic in two longitudinal UK population cohorts.** medRxiv preprint. June 18, 2020. ([LINK](#)). **Preprint - not yet peer-reviewed.**

- “There were strong and replicated associations between several pre-existing mental health problems and higher depression and anxiety, including a history of major depression disorder, psychosis-like symptoms, negative cognition, neuroticism, and a history of self-harm.”

Frank, A. et al. **Mentally ill in times of crisis: Subjective stress from COVID-19 - COVID-19 Concerns and Worries in Patients with Mental Illness.** Psychiatr Prax. June 15, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Plunkett, P. et al. **Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on patients with pre-existing anxiety disorders attending secondary care.** Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine. June 8, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Termorshuizen, J. et al. **Early Impact of COVID-19 on Individuals with Eating Disorders: A survey of ~1000 Individuals in the United States and the Netherlands.** June 8, 2020. ([LINK](#)) **Preprint - not yet peer-reviewed.**

- “Although many participants acknowledged and appreciated the transition to telehealth, limitations of this treatment modality for this population were raised. Individuals with past histories of eating disorders noted concerns about relapse related to COVID-19 circumstances. Encouragingly, respondents also noted positive effects including greater connection with family, more time for self-care, and motivation to recover.”

Phillipou, A. et al. **Eating and exercise behaviors in eating disorders and the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia: Initial results from the COLLATE project.** International Journal of Eating Disorders. June 1, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Titov, N. et al. **Rapid report: Early demand, profiles and concerns of mental health users during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.** Internet Interventions. June 1, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Lasevoli, F. et al. **Psychological distress in serious mental illness patients during the COVID-19 outbreak and one-month mass quarantine in Italy.** Psychological Medicine. May 19, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Plomecka, M. et al. **Mental Health Impact of COVID-19: A global study of risk and resilience factors.** medRxiv preprint. May 9, 2020. ([LINK](#)) **Preprint – not yet peer-reviewed.**

- “Female gender, pre-existing psychiatric condition, and prior exposure to trauma were identified as notable risk factors”

Newby, J. et al. **Acute mental health responses during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia.** medRxiv preprint. May 8, 2020. ([LINK](#)) **Preprint - not yet peer-reviewed.**

- “Participants with self-reported history of a mental health diagnosis had significantly higher distress, health anxiety, and COVID-19 fears than those without a prior mental health diagnosis.”

Moreira, P. et al. **Protective elements of mental health status during the COVID-19 outbreak in the Portuguese population.** medRxiv preprint. May 1, 2020. ([LINK](#)) **Preprint - not yet peer-reviewed.**

- “...individuals previously receiving psychotherapeutic support exhibited better psychological indicators if they did not interrupt the process as a consequence of the outbreak.”

Mental Health Research Canada and Pollara Strategic Insights. **Mental Health During COVID-19 Outbreak Wave 1.** April 2020. ([LINK](#))

Expert Opinion

Figuroa C.A. et al. **The need for a mental health technology revolution in the COVID-19 pandemic.** Front. Psychiatry. June 3, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Taylor, C.B. et al. **Digital technology can revolutionize mental health services delivery: The COVID-19 crisis as a catalyst for change.** International Journal of Eating Disorders. May 25, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Lieberman, J.A. et al. **Meeting the mental health challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.** Psychiatric Times. April 24, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Gunnell, D. et al. **Suicide Risk and Prevention during the COVID-19 Pandemic.** Lancet Psychiatry. April 21, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- Related article:
 - Reger, M. et al. **Suicide Mortality and Coronavirus Disease 2019-A Perfect Storm?** JAMA Psychiatry. April 10, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Santos, C.F. **Reflections about the impact of the SARS-COV-2/COVID-19 pandemic on mental health.** Braz. J. Psychiatry. April 17, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Galea, S. et al. **The mental health consequences of COVID-19 and physical distancing: The need for prevention and early intervention.** JAMA Intern Med. April 10, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Fonseca, et al. **Schizophrenia and COVID-19: risks and recommendations.** Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry. April 9, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- See “Table 1 Recommendations for health professionals and families regarding schizophrenia patients.”

Kavoor, A. **COVID-19 in People with Mental Illness: Challenges and Vulnerabilities.** Asian Journal of Psychiatry. April 8, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- “In addition, self- quarantine measures in this population may pose several challenges. Apart from practical difficulties in implementation, there can be further deterioration in their mental status, including anger and anxiety 4-6 months after release from quarantine.”

Sani, G. et al. **Mental health during and after the COVID-19 emergency in Italy.** Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences. April 4, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Druss, B. **Addressing the COVID19 Pandemic in Populations with Serious Mental Illness.** JAMA Psychiatry. April 3, 2020. ([LINK](#))

- “People with serious mental illnesses will be at uniquely high risk during this period, as will be the public mental health care system central to delivering their care. Careful planning and execution at multiple levels will be essential for minimizing the adverse outcomes of this pandemic for this vulnerable population.”

Yao, H. et al. **Patients with mental health disorders in the COVID-19 epidemic.** Lancet Psychiatry. April, 2020. ([LINK](#))

News Articles

- Rehab4addictions. **Mental Health & Addiction during the Coronavirus Pandemic.** May 21, 2020. ([LINK](#))
- WHO News Release. **Substantial investment needed to avert mental health crisis.** May 14, 2020. ([LINK](#))
- National Alliance on Mental Health. **The coronavirus pandemic is pushing America into a mental health crisis.** May 6, 2020. ([LINK](#))
- Business Insider. **Access to mental healthcare is about to get harder, at a time when even more people need help.** May 1, 2020. ([LINK](#))
- Scientific American. **COVID-19’s psychosocial impacts.** March 20, 2020. ([LINK](#))

Methodology

Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research (NLCAHR) COVID-19 Quick Response reports are initiated by, and shared with, our partners in the provincial health system, including the four Regional Health Authorities, the Departments of Health and Community Services and Children, Seniors and Social Development, and public health officials.

NLCAHR staff work with topic submitters to clarify the research question. We then search for related systematic reviews, meta-analyses, other reviews, interim and other guidance statements, primary research, expert opinion and health and science reporting.

We use several search strategies, with a focus on the following databases:

- [CADTH](#)
- [Canadian Pharmacists Association](#)
- [Campbell Collaboration](#)
- [Cochrane Collaboration](#)
- [Centre for Disease Control](#) (CDC)
- [Centre for Evidence Based Medicine](#) (CEBM)
- [Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre](#)
- [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#)
- [Health Canada](#)
- [Joanna Briggs Institute](#)
- [Johns Hopkins](#)
- [MedRxiv](#)
- [National Institutes of Health](#) (NIH)
- [National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases](#) (NIAID)
- [National Library of Medicine](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- [Trip Database](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

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