



Osservatorio Nazionale

delle Buone Pratiche sulla sicurezza nella Sanità

Scheda per la rappresentazione dell'esperienza

Level: Local Health Authority

Topics:

- Support to staff, hospitalized patients and positive patients in household isolation, psychoeducation to the population, training and support to staff of residential facilities for elderly people and to positive residents' family members.

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Integrated psychological intervention in time of COVID-19

The Hospital Psychology Unit of the San Martino Hospital of Belluno coordinated a psychological support program integrated with the institutions with the aim of responding, based on the emergency psychology model, to the needs of the population, of COVID patients and their families, of healthcare workers of COVID departments and nursing homes of the Belluno Province. The COVID-19 psychological support team did not include volunteers but colleagues from the hospital psychology service with knowledge in the field of health psychology. Before the launch of the project, the professionals involved were trained and received information material about the implementation of emergency protocols with special regard to the COVID-19 emergency. Weekly oversight is provided by the Center for Studies and Research in Psychotraumatology of Milan.

Support is directed:

- To patients in household isolation, quarantined patients and patients under active monitoring, patients hospitalized in COVID departments and their families, especially in case of worsening of the patient's conditions or death. In accordance with the Civil Protection department and the organizations Department for prevention a procedure was identified for household isolated patients including needs identification and subsequent sending of names to the psychologist team (203 interviews were carried out starting from march 21) and a protocol for critical patients' families or deceased patients' family was developed (36 support interventions starting from March 26)
- To healthcare workers, through training coordinators/team leaders of the COVID units on daily defusing use (10 training meetings followed by 21 oversight/briefing meetings with the psychologist) with possibility of individual support helplines, especially in case they tested positive (22 support interventions starting from April 1); Psychoeducational contents for healthcare workers were developed and uploaded onto the organization intranet (videos about decompression, relaxation, mindfulness and physiotherapy techniques, nutrition, sleep and physical activities tips, advice on how to communicate bad news by phone): these are short and easy-to-use contents one can use during a 5-minute break.



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- c. To the general population, through developing specific information sheets and videos about different topics (tips for kids, teenagers, adults, elderly people, people with dementia, tips for sleep hygiene and for avoiding emotional contagion) broadcast daily on local TV and available on the organization intranet.

After observation of the evolution of COVID cases in the province, a procedure was identified to provide support to healthcare workers upon request to the organization and to the general population upon GP referral. Nursing homes are provided with team leaders training about defusing, oversight and availability to support healthcare workers and family members (as of now, 7 training meetings for psychologists/coordinators/educators were provided for as many nursing homes in the area).

The choice to extensively implement psychoeducational and group (defusing and debriefing) interventions is due to the need to constantly normalize and contain healthcare workers' stress so as to improve their resilience thus lowering the chances of relapses from the psychological point of view.

Upon request, the team provided short training sessions (videoconferences) and disseminated information material about emergency psychology to improve and/or adapt the the activities carried out to the current situation.