



Healthcare Workers- Coping with Infectious Disease Outbreaks in the Dialysis Setting

As the Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, continues to spread throughout the U.S. with daily reports of new confirmed cases, we are all experiencing a wide range of thoughts, feelings and reactions. It is normal to experience emotional distress and conflicting feelings when called upon to provide life-sustaining care during a disease outbreak.

Some common reactions:

- Guilt in leaving your facility understaffed if personally exhibiting symptoms
- Ethically torn to provide services yet worried about your own safety and that of your family
- Intense physical and mental stress, such as:
 - Anxiety, worry, panic
 - Grief over loss of a patient
 - Feeling helpless
 - Social withdrawal
 - Difficulty concentrating or sleeping
 - Anger
 - Hypervigilance to your health and body
 - Physical reactions such as headaches, body pain, stomach problems and skin rashes
- Having to work extended hours, sometimes at a location other than normal, inundated with triage, and performing some duties that are not part of your normal job description

For managers of dialysis facilities, here are some ways to help your staff:

- Maintain sensitivity to individual responses to stress
- Offer opportunities to talk about feelings
- Encourage team members to support one another by checking in periodically
- Refer staff for help with counseling as needed

It is important that you take care of yourself. Some key coping tips:

- As much as possible, maintain a healthy diet, exercise and sleep
- Though you want to stay informed, stick to credible sources for information, such as the CDC
- Take a break from the news, and focus on today and things that are positive in your life and that you can control
- Talk to loved ones who are supportive – use Skype or FaceTime if you are not able to talk to them in person
- If you are coping with the loss of a patient, process your emotions with another empathetic nurse or social worker
- Avoid alcohol and other drugs
- Relax your body - Take deep breaths, stretch, meditate or pray
- Make time for fun, and laugh as much as you can
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking
- Seek help when needed

Helpful Resources:

SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline provides crisis counseling 24/7 and is confidential

Call 800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>

HHS Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health: Tips for Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation During an Infectious Disease Outbreak

<https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4894.pdf>



End-Stage Renal Disease
Network Program

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