



June 3: Join Team NM, Impact of COVID-19 on Behavioral Health Services, Response and Reactivation Survey

This week's issue focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on the psychological well-being of Americans and how Northwestern Medicine is developing a comprehensive approach to respond to the increasing demand for Behavioral Health Services. Please remember to provide feedback through NM's **COVID-19 Response and Reactivation Survey** (login required) and to join **Team NM** (login required) to help us support communities with the greatest need.

JOIN TEAM NM IN CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

On Monday, you received an email from Northwestern Memorial HealthCare President and Chief Executive Office Dean M. Harrison, regarding Northwestern Medicine's commitment to improve the health and well-being of the communities we are privileged to serve.

As an integrated academic health system serving the entire Chicagoland area, NM is in a unique position to address social determinants of health. We encourage all NM physicians to join us in this effort by participating in volunteer activities that will support communities with the greatest need.

To learn more about what Northwestern Medicine is doing during this time of crisis and beyond, visit the **Northwestern Medicine Community** website. To get involved, visit **Team NM** on NM Interactive (login required).

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

COVID-19 is expected to have an unprecedented psychological impact, leading to increasingly heightened feelings of anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts. Research conducted and compiled by healthcare industry research firms illustrates the depth and breadth of this impact.

Data reviewed and compiled by the Advisory Board summarizes the effect of the pandemic on the mental health of several key populations across the U.S. with the following conclusions:

General population

- **Collective grief, fear and loneliness;** 80% of Americans report moderate or high levels of distress
- **Financial crises** are linked to increased depression, anxiety, substance misuse and suicides

People with behavioral health conditions

- **Limited access** to BHS treatment

- Stress, isolation and uncertainty can **trigger or exacerbate symptoms**

Clinicians and first responders

- **Extreme stress and trauma** with frontline staff reporting depression (50%), anxiety (45%), insomnia (34%) and distress (72%)

COVID-19 patients and their families

- **Quarantining** can cause post-traumatic stress symptoms, confusion and anger with possibly long-lasting effects

The Advisory Board also reports that while the need for BHS skyrockets, most barriers to treatment remain:

- 56% shortage of mental health professionals
- Twice the denial rate of private insurance of behavioral health care compare to medical care
- Financial insecurity and job loss exacerbate unaffordability problem
- Stigma and discomfort seeking care for behavioral health
- Physicians and nurses concerned about maintaining licensure

Additional surveys from Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) and McKinsey & Co., conducted in March and April respectively, illustrate that as the crisis continues, distress associated with COVID-19 is having an increasingly negative impact on mental health. Over a three-week period in March, KFF found that survey respondents who reported that worry or stress related to COVID-19 had either a major or minor impact on mental health increased from 32% to 45%.

A McKinsey and Co. survey conducted in April suggests that the impact on mental health seems to be growing, with 80% of 1,062 respondents reporting high or moderate levels of distress associated with COVID-19. Among those who have experienced employment reductions or job loss (n=319), the impact is even greater, with 87% reporting high or moderate levels of distress.

Based on this research, the psychological trauma caused by the COVID-19 crisis – grief and loss, economic injury, social isolation – will have lasting effects beyond the pandemic, and drive up the need for both inpatient and outpatient BHS.

BHS Collaborative Care

One of the ways NM is addressing the increased demand for BHS is through a new Collaborative Care program, which Northwestern Medical Group started rolling out about 18 months ago. Collaborative Care allows a psychiatrist to consult on a patient's treatment recommendations via a Behavioral Care Coordinator (BCC). The BCC conducts weekly calls with the patient to assess their well-being, and then communicates as needed with the psychiatrist and the patient's Primary Care Physician. The psychiatrist makes recommendations about medication management and provides guidance to the BCC, but the Primary Care physician maintains control of patient care.

A majority of the work associated with Collaborative Care is done over the phone. This is proven to be not only effective, but also very convenient for patients, thereby increasing the likelihood of them completing the program. Fortunately, the CPT codes established for Collaborative Care specifically allow for phone calls. This is not something that is temporarily allowed due to COVID-19. As such, the

convenience of this service is not dependent on the current public health emergency. NMG plans to make the program available across all NMG primary care practices by the end of the fiscal year.

As additional BHS resources become available, we will share them with you on [Physician Forum](#) and through our other physician communication channels.

COVID-19 RESPONSE AND REACTIVATION SURVEY DELAYED

The Northwestern Medicine COVID-19 Focus Survey previously announced to start June 2 will be delayed. Watch *Connections*, [NM Interactive](#) (login required) and [Physician Forum](#) for information about new survey dates. If you have questions, please email physicianengagement@nm.org.

REMEMBER TO GET #FITFORTHEFRONTLINE

NM is inviting physicians, providers, employees and community-based supporters to join the campaign. All proceeds raised by our health system will benefit the COVID-19 Relief Fund at NM. Visit the [#FitForTheFrontLine](#) page on nm.org to learn more and become part of the movement.

Thank you to all NM providers for your continued partnership and leadership during this unprecedented time. If you have questions about NM Reactivation or would like to share the story of an NM hero, please email us at covid-19md@nm.org.



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