MACDONALD FRANKLIN OSI RESEARCH CENTRE

LAWSON HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE

LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT

Study Title
Moral distress and well-being of health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic: A longitudinal study

Principal Investigator
J. Don Richardson, MD, FRCPC

Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in an online longitudinal study using surveys to examine the moral distress and well-being experienced by health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background/Purpose

On the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic are health care workers, who are uniquely responsible for mitigating its impact on the community. Many health care workers may now be working under extreme stress, and may also be at a high risk of encountering difficult moral-ethical dilemmas (e.g., tending to patients without adequate personal protective equipment). It is necessary to provide a voice to health care workers and document the moral distress, well-being, and overall health care delivery experiences in the wake of COVID-19.

Inclusion Criteria

- Are at least 18 years of age
- Must be either:
  - Currently working as a health care worker
  - Worked as a health care worker at some point between the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and now
- Employed in Canada (currently or at some point during the COVID-19 pandemic)

Exclusion Criteria

Health care workers may not participate if they:

- Are unable to, or do not provide consent

Study Design/Procedures

Approximately 500 health care workers will be recruited across Canada using email, word of mouth, social media posts, and participant recruitment websites. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a series of questionnaires administered through an online survey platform (REDCap) to examine moral-ethical challenges encountered in the workplace, mental health, workplace stress, and perceptions related to the delivery of care to patients. Demographics and self-reported infection status will also be collected. The study duration will be catered to your availability. A short-form version of the study is available at baseline (approximately 10 minutes), with a longer option available if you have the time (approximately 15-25 minutes). As part of this survey, we will request your email. This will be used to re-contact you in the future to complete follow-up surveys (approximately 15 minutes); these emails will be sent approximately every three months for a period of 18 months. Invitations to participate in follow-up assessments will be automatically sent to your email at 3-month intervals until all assessments are complete.

Risks

The risks of participating in this study are minimal. Your participation will require you to disclose experiences with moral-ethical challenges in your workplace. This may cause you to feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, or distressed. If you do find yourself distressed or uncomfortable during any point of the study, you are welcome to skip over those questions or sections of the survey. Please be aware that although we ask about your psychological symptoms, this is done for research purposes only and no action or interventions will be taken based on your responses. If you are experiencing significant personal distress, please consult a mental health care provider and/or consult the resources that are provided in this letter of information and at the conclusion of the survey. There are no known or other anticipated risks to you as a participant of this study.

Benefits

The research will provide valuable knowledge that can be used to provide guidance on the individual, professional, and organizational-level changes needed to optimize the well-being and minimize the moral distress of health care workers in future crises similar to COVID-19.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. You may change your decision to participate at any point throughout the study. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any point in time.

Confidentiality

All data will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. The results of all questionnaires will remain confidential, except where disclosure is mandated by principles of ethical research or federal law.

All personally identifiable information (emails and gender) will be collected and stored using the secure electronic data capture tool, REDCap. REDCap follows St. Joseph's Health Care security guidelines and policies and all web-based information transmission is encrypted. REDCap was developed specifically around HIPAA-security guidelines. Electronic data will be password-protected and only accessible to the approved study investigators. All electronic documents and study data will be stored on the St. Joseph's Health Care network drive, which is password protected and behind a firewall, and on Lawson Health Research Institute's approved data collection platform REDCap, also found behind a firewall.

Any data that may be published in scientific journals or tests will not reveal your identity nor the specific events recalled during the study. The results of the tests described above will be used for purposes only in the context of this study. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without explanation to the researchers. Representatives of the Western University Health Sciences Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related documents to oversee the ethical conduct of this study. Representatives of Lawson Quality Assurance Education Program may require access to your study-related documents to ensure that proper laws and guidelines are being followed.

Please be advised that your participation in this study, or indeed any research, may involve risks that are currently unforeseen by Lawson Health Research Institute, St. Joseph's Health Care London, or Western University.

Rights as a Participant

You may skip any study procedures without penalty. You do not waive any legal right by completing this study. If you experience any emotional distress during the study, please skip over any questions or survey sections, if desired.

Mental Health Resources

For COVID-19-related mental health resources for health care workers:
http://www.camh.ca/covid19HCW
https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/psychiatry/coping_with_covid_19.html

For general mental health resources:
https://ca.portal.gs/

Please note, use of the listed resources are not for emergencies. If you have a medical or mental health emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest open clinic or emergency room.

Questions about the Study

If you require further information or have questions regarding this study, please contact: Luciana Brown, Research Coordinator, MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre, at 519-685-4292 ext. 48211, or by email at: osiresearch@sjhc.london.on.ca.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics at 1-844-720-9816, email: ethics@uwo.ca. The Health Sciences Research Ethics Board (HSREB) is a group of people who oversee the ethical conduct of research studies. The HSREB is not part of the study team.

By continuing, you provide implied consent to participate in this survey.