



PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON BODY SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT: *During pandemic outbreaks like COVID-19, global attention is focused on curbing the spread of infection while giving minimal or no care to pandemic impact on mental health and psychological well-being of individuals. In this short article attempts have been made to discuss how pandemic infectious outbreaks such as COVID-19 affect the psychological well-being which in turn have great impact on other body systems, the author also draws some recommendations to positively address the issue.*

KEYWORDS: Pandemic, COVID-19, Mental, Psychological, Psychosocial, Well-Being, Health

INTRODUCTION

Right from the global outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 that causes COVID-19 in early January to date; scientific researches have not yet provided an evidence of direct effects of COVID-19 on mental health and psychological well-being. However, it's well known that during infectious disease outbreaks there are always increase level of destructive emotional conditions amongst the population, which ranges from fear, worry, distress and anxiety among others. This is due to fear of infection, restriction of movements, scarcity of food or water et cetera. The global pandemic outbreak of COVID-19 which cannot be excluded is of no doubt resulting same effect. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that severity of any infection can affect thinking and behavior.

The Impact on Body Systems

As noted above, pandemic outbreaks such as COVID-19 tends to cause some negative psychological changes in human beings. Furthermore, according to Bhikha and Dockrat (2015) emotions have powerful effects on the nervous system, which in turn regulates a host of bodily functions. From a scientific perspective, emotions trigger the release of the steroidal response hormones, mainly *cortisol* from *adrenal cortex*. In her explanation, Ayad (2008) elucidated that high level of cortisol have a devastating suppressing effect on immune system; they reduce the number of white blood cells, interfere with the production of lymphocytes, and suppress the production of some immune system regulators, *hyperglycemia*. In addition, some studies have found that excess cortisol damages brain by its destructive effect on the neuro-connectors or dendrites. Ultimate effect is that a person becomes more susceptible to the development and progress of malignant growths and more vulnerable to infections by pathogenic micro-organisms, cellular malfunctions and tumors.



Subsequently, fear, worry and anxiety caused by the spread of infectious disease like COVID-19 can lead to constant stimulation of sympathetic nervous system, which in turn results to permanent rise in blood sugar level (BSL), increase breakdown and mobilization of stored fat, coronary heart problems, decrease the activity of digestive tract, just to start with.

CONCLUSION

As discussed earlier, pandemic outbreak of infectious disease like COVID-19 affects mental and psychosocial well-being, which in turn can lead to a great damage to some body systems, interventions are required to better address the issue. This includes actions from both public and personal/individual.

Public responsibilities include emergency planning and response measures to support mental and psychosocial well-being, facilitate access to basic life needs like food, water and electricity as reliable and possible, communicating broad messages that are positive to the whole of society, promote easy communication between families and mental health support groups, and emergency psychological first aid training should be given to the health workers, community leaders, religious leaders, youth leaders and volunteers (Eaton, 2020).

Individual responsibilities are many per se, to mention but few are; being calm and optimistic that all will be well, practicing passive meditation, finding time for oneself to relax, regular and appropriate intake of immune boosters, moderate exercise as well. Classical studies show that spiritual injunctions on contentment and steadfastness also have a great effect (Ayad, 2008).

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