Impact of COVID-19 on nursing students’ mental health: a systematic review and meta-analysis

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

- Since early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on all aspects of education and healthcare delivery.
- Student nurses are in a position where they may be impacted by COVID-19 from both an educational perspective and in their role as learners in practice.
- The purpose of this systematic review and meta-analysis was to gather, appraise and synthesise research on student nurses’ well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on mental health and sleep disturbances.

METHODS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion criteria</th>
<th>Search strategy</th>
<th>Appraisal and analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studies focused on the prevalence of mental health problems or sleep disturbances in nursing students during the COVID-19 pandemic.</td>
<td>Search took place in June 2021.</td>
<td>Quality judgements were made using the cross-sectional appraisal tool developed by the Joanna Briggs Institute.</td>
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<td>Primary research using cohort, case–control or cross-sectional methods, and reporting the number (%) of cases.</td>
<td>Used four databases—CINAHL, Embase, PubMed and Web of Science.</td>
<td>Meta-analysis of primary research data.</td>
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<td>Articles available in full text and published in either English or Indonesian.</td>
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RESULTS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Seventeen studies—all cross-sectional design—were included, encompassing data from nine countries and 13,247 student nurses.
- Eight studies including 8175 student nurses reported on depression levels; 52% of participants suffered depression during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Three studies (n=817) reported levels of students experiencing fear (41%) and stress (30%).
- The pooled prevalence of anxiety from ten studies was 32%. Over a quarter (27%) of participants in six studies (n=3359) reported sleep disturbances.
- Future research should explore risk factors related to these mental health issues and sleep disturbances, and the effectiveness of interventions to reduce prevalence.

TAKE HOME MESSAGES

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, over a half of student nurses reported suffering from depression, nearly one-third reported stress and/or anxiety and over a quarter experienced sleep disturbance.
- Education and practice placement providers need to ensure comprehensive support is in place to bolster the mental health and well-being of student nurses during and after the pandemic.
- Further research is required to help education providers develop systems that support students through periods of crisis and uncertainty, including future public health emergencies.

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Funding The authors have not declared a specific grant for this research from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.
Evidence for nurse education

Competing interests None declared.

Patient consent for publication Not required.

Provenance and peer review Commissioned; internally peer reviewed.

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Reference