Burnout in nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic: the rising need for development of evidence-based risk assessment and supportive interventions

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Commentary
Burnout is a main occupational problem among healthcare workers (HCWs) and they represent a high-risk group for COVID-19 infection than the general population worldwide (8.7% vs 5.3%).1,2 Nurses play a pivotal role at all levels of caregiving.3 Safeguarding high standards of care during public health crises, nurses are faced with many organizational and clinical challenges which places enormous burden on them and could lead to burnout.4

Galanis et al’s SR examined studies that included ‘all categories of nurses working in hospitals that treat COVID-19 patients and excluded those pertaining to all HCWs without reporting the findings for nurses separately.’5 Remarkably, another SR and MR examined the current pandemic extending across the last two decades and the findings showed widespread and intense impact of infectious disease outbreaks on the HCWs’ mental health.6 Galanis et al revealed publication bias and high heterogeneity among studies. Their work provides future direction for research into creation of a comprehensive assessment of nurses’ burnout and related risk and protective factors.

The COVID-19 outbreak can be considered as a multifaceted trauma,5 specifically for the frontline HCWs who are continuously dealing with work-related stress3,4 and overwhelmed with the workload demands. Future research should focus on prospectively assessing nurses’ mental health and core risk factors for burnout during the various periods of the COVID-19 pandemic.7,8 Furthermore, large-scale and longitudinal investigations into nurses’ perceived psychological support, and its impact on their mental health status during and after the pandemic should be undertaken.2,4,16 To provide quality care for general population, it is critical to identify and establish effective treatment strategies for high-risk nurses and their instant access to mental healthcare during the current COVID-19 pandemic.3,5

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