

Devastating Effects of The Coronavirus Disease Pandemic

We have all felt the devastating effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic (COVID-19) on our families and communities.

It is unequivocal that this pandemic has led to a near total disruption of our social fabric. Global economics have been all but paralyzed. Under these circumstances, one can imagine the psychological toll is significant.

While there is no doubt that COVID-19 is causing significant stress, we won't grasp the long-term mental health effects until we conduct future research. At the same time, and because of this pandemic, we see a positive impact on the way we consider mental health and how the healthcare system operates.

Removing barriers and improving access to care. Since the COVID pandemic, the mental health field has shifted almost completely to telehealth encounters with visits through video or phone. This shift, together with the response from insurers to expand payment for telehealth have resulted in better integration of care and improved access.

Reducing the stigma of experiencing emotional distress and mental illness. As we face this crisis together, and as the issues of mental health and wellness continue to be in the forefront of daily news coverage, the importance of physical safety as well as emotional well-being are normalized and becoming household concerns.

Better appreciation for our healthcare workers and their well-being. One of the major positive outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic is the worldwide appreciation for all healthcare workers who continue to place themselves in harm's way to relieve the suffering of others.

A renewed value of taking care of each other. Even as we have become physically isolated and forced to cancel important celebrations and rites of passage, we also have found new ways to be connected through this shared experience. Communities are reaching out to their elders and other at-risk groups, sharing strategies for staying connected and coping. People are donating their resources and their time, using creativity and humor, as well as creating inspirational and beautiful art.

Maintaining this culture of caring and community moving forward will make us all the more resilient and connected. The COVID pandemic has devastated so many and so much. At the same time, the transformative effect on mental health access, as well as an expanded value placed on our community's health can have a long-lasting positive effect on our healthcare system, if we chose to learn from this experience.