



# Resources for primary care providers experiencing stress related to COVID-19 or other health care crises

Health care workers in the United States have been experiencing high degrees of stress because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some health care workers are providing direct care to those affected by COVID-19 and others are experiencing a decrease in workload and revenue due to recommended delays in elective procedures and patients and families delaying office visits for well-checks.

Health care workers are at high risk for stress-related issues during an infectious disease outbreak, for reasons including high mortality, high health care demands, rationing of basic health care supplies, and moral injury.<sup>1</sup> Health care workers in hospitals that treated SARS patients experienced higher rates of professional burnout; depressive and anxiety symptoms; smoking, drinking, and other problem behavior; and absenteeism two years after the end of the outbreak,<sup>2</sup> though these long-term consequences typically represented subsyndromal stress responses.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, resources to reduce the burden of pandemic-related stress on health care workers could reduce the long-term psychosocial impacts of this crisis. Below are some resources that may be useful for primary care providers and other health care workers in coping with stress related to COVID-19.

## 1 [First Responders First: Sustaining Yourself During the Coronavirus Crisis \(Thrive Global\)](#)

This resource provides lists of “microsteps” relating to self-care, managing stress, mental well-being, and social connection that health care providers could easily integrate into their busy lives.

## 2 [Tips for Disaster Responders: Preventing and Managing Stress \(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \[SAMHSA\]\)](#)

For additional SAMHSA resources, check out the full Disaster Kit and their First Responders and Disaster Responders Resource Portal:

- <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/samhsas-disaster-kit/sma11-disaster>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/disaster-responders>

## 3 [Stress First Aid \(SFA\) for Law Enforcement \(National Center for PTSD\)](#)

The Stress First Aid (SFA) model is a self-care and peer support model that was developed for individuals in high-risk professions to reduce the likelihood that stress reactions will develop into more severe or long-term problems. This model fits nicely for those working in team-based health care settings, given the focus on helping others (rather than oneself) that is inherent in providing health care during a pandemic.

<sup>1</sup>Maunder, R.G., Leszcz, M., Savage, D., Adam, M.A., Peladeau, N., Romano, D., Rose, M., & Schulman, R.B. (2008). Applying the lessons of SARS to pandemic influenza: An evidence-based approach to mitigating the stress experienced by healthcare workers. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 99(6), 486-488.

<sup>2</sup>Maunder, R.G., Lancee, W.J., Balderson, K.E., Bennett, J.P., Borgundvaag, B., & Evans, S. (2006). Long-term psychological and occupational effects of providing hospital healthcare during SARS outbreak. *Emerging Infectious Disease*, 12, 1924-1932.

<sup>3</sup>Lancee, W.J., Maunder, R.G., Goldbloom, D.S., & Co-authors of the Impact of SARS Study. (2008). The prevalence of mental disorders in Toronto hospital workers one to two years after SARS. *Psychiatric Services*, 59(1), 91-95.