Responding to stress experienced by hospital staff working with Covid-19: guidance for planning early interventions*

Staff may experience a wide range of normal feelings and anxieties during the early stages of dealing with Covid-19. The aim of planned responses to active ongoing stress is to foster resilience, reduce burnout and reduce the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder.

- **Good, clear, timely communication, information and training**
  - Do provide (ideally pre-trauma) relevant training on dealing with trauma, mental health awareness
  - Do provide open, honest and frank briefings
  - Do prepare staff for what they might face and have to do

- **Fostering team spirit and cohesion**
  - Do encourage staff to use both informal (e.g., from peers) and formal support mechanisms
  - Do allow time for staff to support each other – including through activities/discussion unrelated to Covid-19

- **Promoting wellbeing through flexible, responsive resourcing**
  - Do create feedback mechanisms so staff can easily tell you what they need more/less of. Act on this feedback
  - Do help staff to stay well - food, rest, sleep, safety (inc PPE), taking breaks

- **High-quality psychological and wellbeing services for staff**
  - Do rotate staff between higher- and lower-stress functions
  - Do buddy less-experienced with more-experienced colleagues
  - Do monitor support needs as the crisis recedes
  - Do allow flexibility for staff affected by stressful events
  - Do identify vulnerable staff members and proactively support them

- **Do role-model** a caring and cohesive approach, following guidance, especially by senior staff
  - While many staff can cope, do have a low threshold for referring to support services

- **Don’t**
  - Offer single session interventions that require staff to talk about their thoughts or feelings - this may increase the likelihood of PTSD.
  - Rush to use psychological interventions too soon – they may interfere with people’s natural coping mechanisms

- **Do**
  - Offer open, honest and frank briefings
  - Prepare staff for what they might face and have to do
  - Encourage staff to use both informal (e.g., from peers) and formal support mechanisms
  - Allow time for staff to support each other – including through activities/discussion unrelated to Covid-19
  - Promote wellbeing through flexible, responsive resourcing
  - Encourage staff to use both informal (e.g., from peers) and formal support mechanisms
  - Provide clinically appropriate supervision
  - Only use trained and competent staff to provide psychological interventions

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COVID Trauma Response Working Group Rapid Guidance (www.traumagroup.org)