

Press Release

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: COVID-19 and Psychiatric Issues**

According to data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the COVID-19 pandemic may have lasting effects on the psychiatric care of patients. Emerging data, historical studies and expert opinion point to a tremendous impact of COVID19 on the development and exacerbation of psychiatric issues. The pandemic has served to amplify personal, social and economic costs of mental illness to a magnitude that's unprecedented. CDC data have shown a significant increase in symptoms of anxiety disorder and depressive disorder since the pandemic began. Numerous study findings have shown adverse psychiatric outcomes, including increased psychosocial stressors, such as life disruption, fear of illness or fear of negative economic effects; phobic anxiety; binge-watching television, which has been linked to mood and sleep disturbances; increased social media exposure; increased alcohol sales and use; and increased calls to domestic abuse and child abuse hotlines.

Moreover, those with pre-existing mental health disorders appeared to be at increased risk for infection with COVID-19 compared with those without mental health disorders. This population is also more likely to develop severe organ dysfunction and to die in ICUs vs. those without mental disorders. Additional complications wrought by the pandemic among those with pre-existing mental health disorders include increased symptoms and poorer access to services and supports since the pandemic's onset, as well as a reduction in the availability of many family, social and psychiatric supports due to physical distancing. The mental health effects of the pandemic also have been seen among health care workers, particularly those on the frontline. This population has reported adverse outcomes including stress exposure, fear of infecting themselves and fear of infecting loved ones. Results of a cross-sectional study of 1,257 health care workers in China revealed 50% reported symptoms of depression, 45% reported anxiety, 34% reported insomnia and 72% reported distress.

Risk factors among frontline health care workers included a lack of social support and communication, maladaptive coping strategies and a lack of training. The psychiatric field has adapted to meet the needs of patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Telepsychiatry has preserved the ability for a significant proportion of interactions between clinicians and patients, and this interface method may provide additional benefit for individuals with severe anxiety disorders. However, additional research is necessary to pinpoint optimal methods for video teleconference group delivery. The pandemic has

resulted in potential negative effects of changes to mental health care, such as resource reallocation to physical health care needs, fewer in person meetings within and across treatment teams, mental and physical strain on health care workers and a shortage of health care workers.

Potential positive effects of changes to mental health care include an increase in overall mental health literacy in the population linked to education about mental health effects of COVID-19 and an opportunity to emphasize the importance of self-care, coping strategies and family support.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a federal agency that conducts and supports health promotion, prevention and preparedness activities in the United States, with the goal of improving overall public health. To learn more about the CDC please visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the COVID-19 Epidemic and its correlation to increased mental illness, alcohol and substance use at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).