

EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF PUBLIC HEALTH SURVEILLANCE STAFF, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, 2020-2021

RESUMEN

Introduction. Health workers are at high risk of mental health problems during epidemics such as the COVID-19 pandemic, but there was no evidence on the effect of the pandemic on public health surveillance staff. We studied the effect of the COVID-19 epidemic on the mental health of personnel who carried out epidemiological surveillance, Dominican Republic, 2020-2021. Population and Methods. Cross-sectional study of 89 public health surveillance staff of provincial directorates and local health areas involved in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We applied an online questionnaire, collected data on exposure variables including sociodemographic, work environment, and the impact by COVID-19. We measured anxiety disorder and burnout syndrome as outcome variables. Used descriptive statistics and explored the association of exposure and outcome variables. Results. The response rate was 42.18% (89/211) with fewer men than women. Twenty-nine percent (26/89) perceived the need to seek psychological help, but only 7.8% (7/89) sought care. Almost 15% (13/89) met the case definition of professional burnout. Thirty-six percent were in charge of epidemiology, 10.1% (9/89) were 60+ year-olds, who were the least affected by anxiety and burnout. Discussion. The results indicate that one in six health workers in charge of public health surveillance had professional burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that inexperience was a main risk factor for burnout. We recommend instituting policies to protect the mental health of public health surveillance staff.

Palabras clave:

COVID-19, healthcare workers, public health surveillance, burnout syndrome, Dominican Republic

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