

COVID-19 Journaling Assignment

Beth Garza

CSON

COVID-19 Journaling Assignment

My initial understanding of the COVID-19 virus was very minimal. In all honesty I thought the virus was nothing much to worry about. Looking back on my preliminary thoughts about all that has happened is so eye opening. I now know that people were not being dramatic or overly cautious, as I had initially thought. I also did not imagine that the virus would spread so far and so fast and still be prevalent this far from flu season. I had not fathomed that the virus would be strong enough to outlast the winter months. While I did not take the virus as seriously as I should have in the beginning, I do now. I honestly certainly did not consider that people would be so unreliable in the prevention of spreading this and other viruses.

I never realized how many people did not regularly wash their hands, cover their sneezes and coughs, and did not use hand sanitizer. These actions immensely caused the rapid spread. Another big reason for the spread was social distancing, or the lack there of. Not getting into people's "personal bubble" is so crucial and played such a big role in the spread as well as the uncovered coughs. This was one of the first things I noticed when I moved to this small town a few years ago. People here do not respect personal space as much as where I was raised. This is another example of unreliable people that contribute to the spread of illnesses in general.

Some concerns and fears that I have now regarding the virus is that it will continue to get worse before it gets better. There have already been too many lives lost because of this. It pains me to think that there are so many more lives to be lost because of the carelessness of people. I am referring to the carelessness of those that are not respecting the seriousness of all that is going on because of this. I will admit that I did not take this seriously when it all came out, but now I realize that it is profoundly serious, and people's lives are being taken at such a high rate. The role I initially played was that of a credulous part of the problem. After watching the progression

of it all, I drastically changed my thoughts and concerns about it. I think that we all must reevaluate the seriousness surrounding this pandemic if we have not already done so. We all need to be better.

The role that others have played have been both good and bad. People that were more learned about the updates regarding the virus were quick to spread the latest information to help others. On the complete opposite side of that good spread of information, there was a lot of misinformation that was spread as well. I also must mention the massive amount of people that went into panic mode and for some reason bought bathroom tissue and hand sanitizer. This only enticed hysteria and spread panic to others. All that chaos masked the actual issue of the virus. People are so impressionable that it hastily got out of hand and caused so much more damage.

When evaluating myself I recognize that I got off to a late start, but I was able to reexamine my actions. Although I did not and still do not go out to social gatherings, I would continue to go shopping and take my whole family along with me. This was completely unnecessary and wrong of me to do. I hope that others will be able to reevaluate their own actions and follow the advice of those that are working towards stopping the spread of the virus.

The difficult part of all of this is seeing all the lives that have been lost. Even with people losing their loved ones, others are still not abiding by the restrictions. This is difficult for all of us. The protesting from people that wanted to open nonessential businesses is a great example of a bad contribution by those that participated. It is difficult to see the country divided and against each other. I understand that for some people staying at home and social distancing are difficult, but it is necessary. I empathize with those people that have a hard time with staying at home essentially alone. People that were furloughed or let go altogether had an even more difficult time. The mental health of those people that have had loss, both the loss of people and jobs, must

have been put to the test. Some people are not good at just staying at home and not being around others. As an introverted person I am not bothered by staying at home, but I commiserate with the extroverts that need social interaction. Those who have diagnosed mental health issues have had a difficult time with staying at home as well.

As of now “112 million Americans live in mental health professional shortage areas” Auerbach and Miller (2020). This is an issue that needs to be addressed because good mental health is a substantial influence on all of us. This is something that might not have been expected or even assumed. Without adequate access to the management of our mental health it has the potential to turn people onto substance abuse, domestic violence, and possible suicidal ideation. The increase in need for mental health professionals and mental health clinics has worsened the demand for more easily accessible mental health care.

Congress has passed the Coronavirus Response Act that has included “free coronavirus testing, paid emergency sick leave, enhanced unemployment insurance, and increased funding for Medicaid” Auerbach and Miller (2020). Although this is an enormous help to those that benefitted from that, it still neglects the treatment of mental health. The older population has greatly been affected by the pandemic. Not only are older persons more at risk for contracting the virus, but they are more prone to loneliness. The forced isolation that the older population must go through can lead to depression and other severe mental issues and disorders. Therefore, the need for a better mental health system is needed. Similar mental health reactions occurred during the outbreak of H1N1 and other national and natural disasters, and yet the same issues are still relevant today.

The impact of the great loss of people and the decline of mental health in general has been an immense impact on the population. This includes healthcare workers as well. The influx

of patients that have tested positive for the coronavirus has caused disarray in acute healthcare settings. There have been closures, furloughs, and layoffs within healthcare. Likewise, there has been a shortage of healthcare staff. The differences in healthcare needs directly affects the communities in which the drastic changes have happened. These opposite changes in different areas in communities all over this country have added to the confusion regarding the best ways to approach this pandemic. The impact of healthcare workers depends on the area in which they live. Both an increase need for nursing staff and a lack of need for nursing staff directly impacts the mental health of the nursing staff. Areas that are in dire need for nurses can cause nurse fatigue and increases the risk of medication errors. Areas that are affected by a decrease in need for nurses are also affecting the mental health of the healthcare workers.

Trying to make sense of the current situation we are all in is a difficult task. The uncertainty of the final impact of the pandemic is a heavy burden that is upon all of us both nationwide and worldwide. With no kind of cure in sight, this only adds to people's frustrations because it is mentally taxing to be feel so hopeless towards not knowing when there will be the potential for this pandemic to come to an end.

During this pandemic I have learned that the mindset and knowledge of the general population towards epidemiology needs to be something that should be emphasized. If peer reviewed journals and other articles were more readily available to the general population, then there would be a more serious approach to the possibility of future pandemics and the containment of such possibilities. If we can continue to spread well documented information and come together as a society to fight this I believe that the mental health as well as physical health would benefit greatly. In society we are only as strong as our weakest link and that weakest link should never have to be mental illnesses.

Being aware of comorbidities is imperative during a pandemic; this is apparent. Although a lot of people are not fully aware of their own comorbidities because of a lack of emphasis on their own health. This is not only concerning mental health, but it also includes our physical health. COVID-19 causes a hyperinflammatory response (Zaim, 2020). This response will directly inhibit the functions of multiple body organs. This response from the body would be tough to treat in a seemingly healthy person. If a person has a coexisting condition, then they will be more cautious during flu and allergy seasons; this is also evident. Which is why we as a people all need to focus on our overall health by being our own advocates in health. This will better prepare all of us for precipitated events such as this pandemic. Hearing stories about young lives being taken by this virus is disconcerting. Even more disconcerting is when people are not even slightly aware of their increased risks for certain conditions because they are not regularly going for their annual physicals. So, a seemingly healthy person could very well not be as healthy as they assume because they have not kept up with their own health issues, risk factors, and management.

Having witnessed the actions of those locally and around the world, I am hopeful that this pandemic will better prepare us for the future of our own overall health and the global health of people in general. I know that my perspective regarding “just a virus” has changed. I have also gained so much respect for those that are involved in the science of health. I hope that the ones that were like me and did not take this as seriously as we should have, will also change their perspectives. What I would do differently would have been to take this more seriously earlier on. I do not feel that I made anything worse because I did not go to gatherings or anything similar. But what I did do was that I continued to go shopping with my whole family including my three

children. My actions put my family and others at a higher risk at contributing to the spread of the virus.

This whole pandemic has opened my eyes to the hard work and dedication of the professional practices surrounding these issues. Every year when I get my flu shot it is something that is so simple that it almost annoying to me. I have never taken into consideration the challenging work that went into the development of the vaccine. I also never contemplated the great need for the prophylactic approach of it. I have yet to live through a time when the option of a vaccine was not available because of a new contagion that had developed until now. This makes me wonder if those that forego the annual vaccines will reconsider after seeing the events firsthand and knowing the importance of it all. I hope that those individuals will not only consider their own health, but the health of others as well.

This experience will greatly improve my practices now and in the future. I have had a few patients that were positive for COVID-19. Seeing those patients fight for their lives was completely different than other extremely ill patients that I have had before. The patients were not able to have the support of their family members with them at the bedside. Not having the security of family and friends while going through something so devastating increases anxieties and puts the patients further into panic. Furthermore, having a COVID-19 patient is difficult because the care plans are less organized since the virus and treatments are unknown to us. Trying to calm a patient during their high stress situations is hard enough but attempting to calm them when specific treatments are unknown makes the whole situation problematic and unpredictable. In healthcare we have the responsibility to be our patient's supporters and activists. This is not something that can be taken lightly.

References

- Auerbach, John, and Benjamin F. Miller. "COVID-19 Exposes the Cracks in Our Already Fragile Mental Health System." *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 110, no. 7, July 2020, pp. 969–970. *CINAHL Plus with Full Text*, EBSCOhost, doi:10.2105/AJPH.2020.305699. Accessed 17 June 2020.
- Bostan, Sedat, et al. "Assessments of Anxiety Levels and Working Conditions of Health Employees Working in COVID-19 Pandemic Hospitals." *Electronic Journal of General Medicine*, vol. 17, no. 5, Sept. 2020, pp. 1–5. *CINAHL Plus with Full Text*, EBSCOhost, doi:10.29333/ejgm/8228. Accessed 17 June 2020.
- Zaim, Sevim, et al. "COVID-19 and Multiorgan Response." *Current Problems in Cardiology*, vol. 45, no. 8, Aug. 2020, pp. N.PAG-N.PAG. *CINAHL Plus with Full Text*, EBSCOhost, doi:10.1016/j.cpcardiol.2020.100618. Accessed 17 June 2020.