

Psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on nursing and midwifery staff at Epworth HealthCare



Epworth
Research

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Introduction

- The global COVID-19 pandemic has had, and will continue to have, substantial impact on the community and on care delivery in Victorian health services.
- Responses to the pandemic have included community-based COVID-19 restrictions, as well as measures implemented by health services such as Epworth HealthCare (EHC), including: infection control strategies; distribution and training in the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); the use of spotters, temperature screening, and contact tracing; pre-admission testing of elective patients; restricted visitation and reduced non-urgent face-to-face appointments.
- There is limited information about the wellbeing of health care professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in nurses and midwives - the largest occupational group in the health service.

Aims

This study sought to assess the psychosocial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on nurses and midwives at EHC. This project forms one part of a broader research program undertaken across several Victorian healthcare sites. Findings will be used to inform health service responses to current and future outbreaks of infectious diseases.

Methodology

Design, participants and procedure

- Cross-sectional, anonymous online surveys of nurses and midwives employed at EHC
- Survey data were collected between 15th June – 31st August, 2020 (Second wave; Stage 2/3/4 restrictions).
- Nurses and midwives were invited to participate via the EHC staff intranet and group emails.

Measures

Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale 21 (DASS-21)

- The DASS-21 is a 21-item measure of the severity of symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress experienced during the previous week.
- Severity of symptoms are scored according to five categories: *Normal*; *Mild*; *Moderate*; *Severe*; and *Very Severe*.
- The instrument is widely used and has been validated in both clinical and non-clinical populations.

COVID-19 pandemic impact questionnaire

- Additional items were developed for this survey, including measures of: (1) sociodemographic characteristics; (2) impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the workplace and home life; and (3) perceptions of EHC's organisational response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results (participant characteristics)

- A total of 84 EHC nurses and midwives participated in the study.
- Table 1 describes participants' characteristics.
- Participants were predominately: female; born in Australia; living in a household with others; healthy (reported no health condition); working in a clinical nursing role; and employed at Epworth Richmond, Freemason's or Geelong.

Table 1. Participant characteristics

Participant characteristic	Total (N = 84)
Female, n (%)	74 (88.1)
Born in Australia, n (%)	57 (67.9)
Lives alone, n (%)	4 (4.8)
Reported having health condition, n (%)	20 (23.8)
Full-time employment, n (%)	42 (50)
Role, n (%)	
NUM/ANUM	23 (27.4)
Education/administration	8 (9.5)
Clinical	53 (63.1)
Position, n (%)	
Nursing	69 (82.1)
Midwifery	7 (8.3)
Both	8 (9.5)
Hospital site, n (%)	
Richmond	43 (51.2)
Freemasons	25 (29.8)
Geelong	17 (20.2)
Other	3 (3.6)
Age, mean (SD)	38.1 (11.8)
Years professional practice, median (IQR)	10 (14)
Years employed at EHC, median (IQR)	4 (9)

Results (study outcomes)

Symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress

- Most respondents experienced symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress within the normal range (see Fig. 1).
- However, a considerable proportion of respondents had elevated levels of depression (35%), anxiety (25%) and stress (27%) of at least mild severity. Forty-five percent of all respondents ($n = 38$) had at least one elevated symptom.
- Approximately 5% of respondents experienced severe or extremely severe symptoms of depression, anxiety or stress (see Fig. 1).

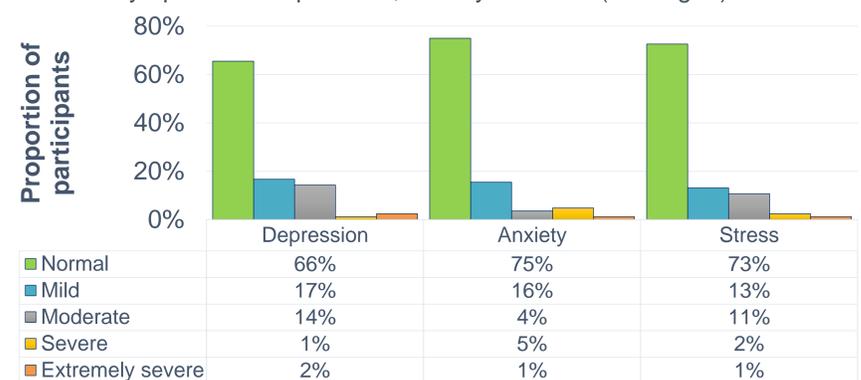


Fig 1. Severity of Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale 21 (DASS-21) scores

Impacts of COVID-19 on work and personal life

- Participants identified a range of impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their work and personal lives. Responses related to the ten highest rated impacts are described in Fig 2.

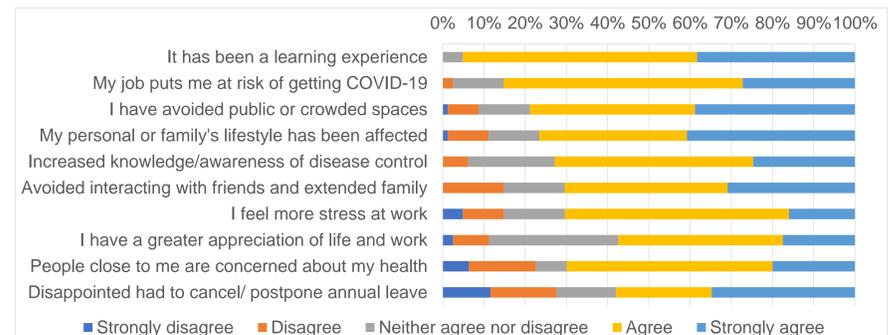


Fig 2. Ratings for the ten highest rated life impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

Perceptions of the organisational response to the COVID-19 pandemic

- Perceptions of EHC's responses to COVID-19 are described in Fig 3.
- While three-in-four respondents rated EHC's overall level of preparedness as good/excellent, less than half believed the degree of concern for the physical and emotional well-being of nurses and midwives, or the availability of emotional supports, was good/excellent.

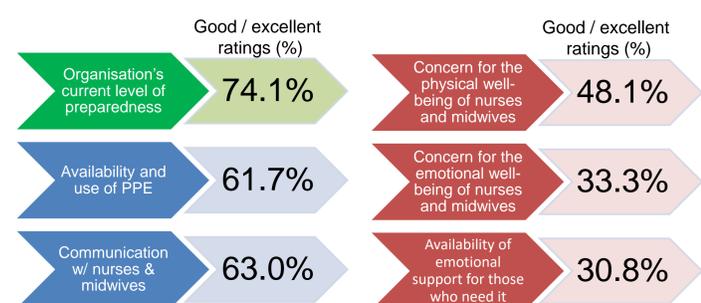


Fig 3. Proportion of participants who rated EHC's organisational response as good / excellent

Conclusions

- COVID-19 has considerably impacted the work and home lives of EHC nurses and midwives. Despite the scale of the new challenges, respondents also noted some positive consequences related to the pandemic response.
- While most respondents appeared to be coping, over 40% of the EHC nurses and midwives reported elevated levels of psychological distress and may benefit from further psychosocial support.
- Ratings of existing supports suggested the need to review and expand measures to improve the emotional wellbeing of EHC nurses and midwives.