Dear Editor,

Issue number 1 of volume 6 of the journal published the article by Magaña Salazar et al. on work stress and mental health of front-line personnel in COVID-19 care in a regional hospital in San Miguel, El Salvador. This article identified a positive correlation, using Spearman's coefficient, between work stress and mental health status, with the use of work stress scales from the International Labor Organization and the abbreviated Goldberg scale. Although the high levels did not reach alarming percentages, health personnel assigned to the first line of care during the COVID-19 pandemic, presented occupational stress and alterations in mental health. A total of 121 workers from the emergency and hospitalization areas of COVID-19 were studied, most of them were women and 44.6% were nursing personnel; the average age was 33.5 years old. Occupational stress and mental health disorders were found mainly, between the ages of 21 and 40 years old. Nursing, radiology and general services workers presented high levels of mental health disorders.

These results coincide with the study conducted at the Jipijapa Basic Hospital on the impact of COVID-19 related to the mental health of nursing personnel, in which several psychological alterations were described, including stress, fear, anxiety, depression, and lack of concentration to fulfill the tasks required by their work, which have increased with the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that the nursing personnel presented psychological alterations such as anxiety, depression, anguish, and panic. In addition, somatic problems developed due to the excess of working hours caused by the increased number of patients attended in the Teófilo Dávila Hospital. Similarly, the fear of infecting family members due to the constant risk in the care areas also represented an aspect that affected mental health.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the high demand from critically ill patients, the need for patient isolation, and the consequent use of safety measures such as personal protective equipment increased the anxiety and stress of nursing staff.

Muñoz et al. emphasize the nursing staff as the health personnel who are responsible for looking after the health condition of patients in hospitalization areas for prolonged periods; this places them in constant exposure to various stressful situations, such as suffering, pain, despair, irritability of patients, the performance of procedures involving painful experiences and death, which generates an emotional burden that often leads them to ignore their self-care and develop feelings such as frustration, fear, anger, or despair, defined as causes of a poorly adaptive stress.

Other studies describe that nursing students mainly presented sleep alterations, followed by somatic symptoms and behavioral and interpersonal relationship disturbances. It is striking that 42% of the participants exhibited exhaustion at a medium level, which constitutes a risk of developing burnout syndrome.

On the other hand, it is essential to conduct a diagnosis of the health situation of workers to avoid inadequate work
performances through the implementation of timely interventions, including management processes aimed at improving rest areas and schedules, meal times, recreational meetings for emotional care, continuous staff rotation, as well as the supply of the necessary resources to perform the work, including biosafety equipment¹.

In addition, it is relevant to establish wellness, mental health promotion, and stress reduction programs to foster a healthy work environment for health personnel and a continuous training process for personnel to improve patient care since their working environment plays an essential role in the reintegration of patients to their activities and to society¹.

This necessity leads to the importance of reviewing the experiences and implementing emotional and psychological support interventions in the workplace to strengthen the response of health personnel and health processes, adopting good practices as an excellent opportunity for research and action.

**Funding**

There was no source of funding.

**References**


