COVID-19 and staff mental health: is there an evidence? An Italian field study
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Since the early months of the COVID-19 epidemic, a large number of scientific papers have considered the possibility that healthcare professionals (HCWs) were affected by depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and psychological distress. The abundance of research has also made it possible to produce several systematic reviews and meta-analyzes. All the studies retrieved in these reviews, however, were cross-sectional. Depressive symptoms and anxiety in HCWs were compared to "normal values", administrative staff, or external sample; moreover, some studies had no control group. No longitudinal study has been produced so far. Some studies had negative results. Overall, there is still little evidence of an increase in mental health problems and sleep disturbances in HCWs during the outbreak.

To fill this gap, we investigated the mental health of workers who have been monitored for many years in an Italian local health unit. Mental health was investigated with standardized questionnaires. 82 HCWs who tested positive at the COVID-19 nasopharyngeal swab, 152 exposed workers who tested negative and 361 unexposed controls participated in the survey. Anxiety was reported by 16.6% of COVID-19 cases and depression by 20.3%, with a significant increase in the estimated risk (OR = 4.3; CI95% = 2.4-7.4 for anxiety, OR = 3.5; CI95% = 2.0-6.0 for depression). In test-positive cases, sleep was a significant moderating factor in the relationship between occupational stress or PJ and anxiety. Exposed negative HCWS also had an increased OR for anxiety (1.84; CI95% = 1.1-3.1) and depression (2.2 CI95% = 1.4-3.5).

The frequency of anxiety and depression disorders in the population examined was not higher than that recorded in the years preceding the epidemic during periodic occupational health checks in the workplace. Mental health support and organizational interventions must mainly concern workers with positive tests and should also tend to improve sleep quality.
During an epidemic, an effective communication strategy can be essential in reaching the necessary recommendations to mitigate the crisis. Awareness of risks is a necessary condition for people to adhere with a shift in the media discourse and to the use of humour.

Results: A total of 8,251 comments were analysed in 10 periods of 4 days each. Analysis was carried out based on two global categories: media sources, and 8 media sources were analyzed between 26th February and 7th March. Citations messages on social networks of 3 official information sources, and 8 media sources were analyzed between 26th February and 7th March. Publications related to COVID-19 were analyzed in 4-days periods and categorized. A qualitative theory-driven thematic approach was used to analyze the comments and to identify themes that emerged from the data. The results showed that the media discourse was characterized by the presence of positive messages, which were more frequent in the period before the first confirmed case. After the announcement of the first confirmed case of COVID-19 outbreak, the risk perception increased during the first 15 days of analysis, and the threat level ratio increased during the same period.

Conclusions: The results of this study suggest that during an epidemic, it is crucial to implement communication strategies customized to people's needs and priorities to help them make informed decisions. Effective communication strategies should be developed by considering the changing needs of the population and the media discourse.

Key messages: Health care workers who have had unprotected exposure to COVID-19 patients, and even more those who have contracted the infection, have sleep problems, anxiety and depression. The psychological support intervention for health care workers should include the promotion of sleep hygiene.