



PANDEMIC RELATED SUICIDE UPTICK EXPECTED

Updated May 1, 2020

Today we take a quick look at the drivers of COVID-19 related mental illness and how you can utilize the services of **Care Match** and the **Catalyst Care Team** to improve the mental health of your patients.

DRIVERS OF COVID-19 RELATED MENTAL ILLNESS

The start of Mental Health month is a good reminder about the need to **increase awareness of the worrisome effects** the pandemic is currently having, or will have, on many of our patients.

- Experts, globally, believe we will see an **increase in suicides** like those previously seen during the 2003 SARS outbreak and the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic
- Companies that provide mental health services are reporting increases in demand by as much as 50% due to the stress of the pandemic
- Those still employed are simultaneously experiencing the **fear of possible job loss** and the health-related **fear of returning to the work**
- **Anti-anxiety medication** has spiked 34% since the start of the pandemic
- Prolonged exposure to increased anxiety and fear can **develop or trigger PTSD**, something seen as a result of the SARS outbreak

In a recent American Psychiatric Association poll, **more than 1/3 of Americans** reported a COVID-19 related negative impact on their mental health. The **fear of personally becoming infected, or of a loved one** contracting COVID-19, drives much of the increase in mental illness, 48% and 62% of respondents, respectively.

Another important concern is fear of the long-lasting impact COVID-19 could have on the economy. Patients who **struggle with anxiety and depression** may not be able to escape the worry that they won't be able to pay their bills or that they will not have access to the basics like food and medicine.

The fears and worries about the pandemic are destabilizing patients who already suffer from anxiety and depression. It is **triggering OCD tendencies** in germaphobes, fueling the desire for social isolation in the agoraphobe and supplying the anxious insomniacs with countless rumination-generating concerns that are beyond their control.

Depressed patients have **lost access to the exercise**, social connection and healthy routines that help keep their depression at bay. Both routinely controlled mental illness patients and patients who typically do not struggle are feeling the effects of:

- Challenges with **sleep**
- Increases in **substance and alcohol use**
- **Relationship strains** from weeks of confinement
- **Increased stress** with children constantly underfoot
- Poor **eating habits**
- More **sedentary** lifestyle
- Worries about **finances**
- Concerns about **access to care and medications**

Primary care delivers up to **80% of the behavioral health care** across the US and subsequently, patients will be turning to us to address their escalating symptoms.

FOUR WAYS YOU CAN HELP

- A **mental health check-in** with patients during each visit **increases the opportunity** to identify and **address issues** before they get out of control
- Utilize mental health-centric patient handouts from the [resource page](#)

- Use mental health month as a trigger for a campaign to reach out and engage your mental health patients, optimize medication and explore the need for additional support
- The **Catalyst Care Team** is available to connect patients with mental health self-care resources including services like
 - Integrative assessments with recommendation
 - Mindful meditation
 - Caregiver support access
 - Disease state specific education and self-care instruction
 - Baseline assessment, frequent check-ins and monitoring

TACKLING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Access to mental health services is often challenging for many reasons. Mental health providers frequently do not accept insurance, have no capacity or long wait times for new patients.

Catalyst has secured a relationship with **Care Match** to reduce this access burden. **Care Match** connects patient needs with mental health resources and is a **free service** for Catalyst Healthcare Providers.

- **Care Match** connects referred patients to local mental health providers for virtual visits
- **Care Match** scales providers to assure quick time to first visit, assuring patients get the care they need, when they need it
- Subsequent visits can be converted to face-to-face if desired or deemed necessary
- **Care Match** providers include a wide variety of mental health providers including:
 - Psychiatrists

- Psychologists
 - Licensed Professional Counselors (wide variety of specialties)
 - Social Worker
 - Addiction Medicine Physicians
 - Substance Abuse Counselors
- Large panel of providers who accept insurance, cash services are also available should a patient not have insurance or chose to not utilize insurance

Referral Process

Care Match referral services are **FREE** and easy to use. To initiate a **Care Match** referral and access their team of mental health providers go to [CareMatch.us](https://www.carematch.us).

Healthcare providers click the “**Match Your Patient Now**” link and complete a simple online referral form. Care Match takes over from there.