

Counselling for COVID-19 patients: implications for social well-being

Anietie Imo Effiong¹, Ime Robson Nseobot², Ikoroha Innocent Simeon³, Ursula Ette⁴, Mansoor Ahmed Soomro⁵, Dr. Ashifa Km⁶, Dr. Vinesh Dinnoo⁷, Akpan Udemeobong Edet⁸

¹Principal Officer, Delcanimoff Integrated Services, No. 2 Barracks Road, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria
Email: delcanimoff@yahoo.com

²Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria Email: nseobot857@gmail.com

³Department of Psychology, University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria

⁴Nursing Services Department, University of Uyo Teaching Hospital, (UUTH), Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

⁵Assistant Professor, Sindh University Campus, Dadu, Pakistan, Email: mansoor.soomro@usindh.edu.pk

⁶Assist. Professor, Department of Social Work, Istanbul Gelisim University, Turkey
akariveliparambil@gelisim.edu.tr

⁷Department of Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Pretoria, Bophelo Road, Prinshoff 349-Jr, Pretoria 0084, South Africa

⁸Department of Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Uyo, Nigeria

Correspondent author: delcanimoff@yahoo.com

Abstract: The stress of being diagnosed with corona virus can spring up unresolved conflicts for any human. Counselling is one of the professions that can contribute to the resolution of same problem faced by individual's diagnosed with corona virus. Counselling for corona virus patients include approaches such as emotional support, group counselling, counseling, counselling for self-care, sexual health counselling, family counselling, lifestyle counselling and counselling for the aged. One of the implications for social wellbeing is the stimulation of patients to fight actively, replacing passivity, helplessness and resignation with positivity. Isolation Centres around the world that manage Corona virus patients should set up counselling centres to assist patients in receiving help from trained counsellors to promote psychosocial wellbeing. Counsellors must further educate themselves and seek out opportunities for personal growth, as well as training and the best counselling practices for corona virus patients were recommended among others for effective counselling of corona virus patients.

Keywords: Corona Virus, Covid-19, Counselling, Social wellbeing.

Introduction

Corona virus is an expanding global medical concern. It is a chronic illness that impacts upon every aspect of the life of people and families affected. Interferes with normal psychological and social well-being, and even complicates family functioning. To be diagnosed with corona virus is to enter a realm where everyday aspects of life are altered. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by SARS-CoV-2, initially came to attention in a series of patients with pneumonia of unknown etiology in the Hubei province of China, and subsequently spread to many other regions of the world through global travel either business, conferences, tourism etc. According to [1] the outbreak of the world endemic of corona virus Covid-19 has unarguably taken the world unaware, unprepared thus, leaving the affected countries to suffer the devastating dead crises as well as economic breakdown etc. approximately 2,379,326 million people have been infected with corona virus in the world as at 19th April, 2020 <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>; by projection, it would have risen to 5 million in the last quarter of the year 2020. Unfortunately, all age groups are prone to covid-19-children, adolescents, adult. The virus can infect any persons irrespective of their age but the older people and those with existing health issues/challenges (such as diabetes, heart disease, cardiovascular disease, immune suppressed conditions e.t.c) are more vulnerable to contact the virus than any other group of individuals. Methods of transmission can be through droplet, contaminated materials, sneezing or cough. The symptoms includes but not limited to nausea, fever, dry cough, shortness of breath, pneumonia, fatigue, and other breathing difficulties.

Stress of being diagnosed with corona virus can bring up unresolved concerns for an individual, so counsellors are becoming a significant member of the interdisciplinary health team and are helping to make positive contribution to patients' quality of life. Counselling is one of the professions that can contribute to the resolution of some problem faces by individuals with infected corona virus. It give one a chance to identify and work through problem with a trained counsellor. Counsellors provide service in a variety of settings and to diverse individuals with many different challenges. Combining a counselling approach that involves emotional support, flexibility, recognizing of a patient's strengths, and listening to him review his life story helps the individual come to a better acceptance of his health, and is able to positively lead a new and meaningful life despite the condition. A corona virus infected person that receives sufficient and ongoing

counselling from a trained counsellor is more likely to adapt a healthy life style. Therefore, counsellors who care for, or may want to care for corona virus patients need to be constantly learning and investigating the most current counselling practices. This maintains the best counselling for their patients.

Understating the Spread and Symptoms of Corona Virus

The origin and source of the COVID-19 is from the animal and recently the virus is spread by human to human transmission. The fundamental symptoms of the COVID-19 is where the virus can cause mild, flu – like symptoms such as fever, cough, difficulty breathing, pain in the muscles and the tiredness Nuhu (2020).

More serious cases develop severe pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome, sepsis and septic shock that can lead to the death of the patient. People with existing chronic conditions seem to be more vulnerable to severe illness. [2] the development of vaccines takes time. Several pharmaceutical companies are working on vaccine candidates. These will however, take months before vaccines can be widely used as it needs to undergo extensive testing to determine its safety and efficacy.

From the present fact that the virus is spread among human being, medical experts recommend wearing a mask for every day movement particularly the moment you move outside from your home place where your heading you will necessarily meet other people. Due to the fact that the virus is spread human to human particularly from the infected person to another, it is advisable to avoid the physical contact with the person with cough symptoms. Since the evidence shows that the origin of the virus is from the animals it is advisable to escapes where animals are kept avoiding physical contact with any kind of animal, their excretions or droppings.

In addition to that it is recommended to follow and obey the general rules regarding hand hygiene and food hygiene. That means wash your hand with soap and water to use an alcohol-based disinfectant solution before eating, after using the toilet and after any contact with animals.

The Conceptual Explanation of Counselling

There is no single definition of counselling that is considered generally acceptable. Counselling can have different meanings based on theoretical orientation. Counselling, as a helping profession, has its many approaches and procedures by which help is made available to the client.

Counselling is a process of helping the clients to understand and clarify his views and learn to reach his self-determine goals through meaningful, well-informed choices and through the resolution of problems that could be of emotional or interpersonal nature [3]. It is a relationship in which a trained and experienced person (counsellor) provides information to a counsellee (troubled person) which the latter uses to overcome his challenges. Through the counselling process, counsellee uses information provided him to make informed decisions. [4] describes counselling as a professional help for clients to resolve their peculiar challenges. Concerns, problems and doubts in various aspects of their lives. The goal of counselling is to help the counsellee find solutions to whatever problems he finds around him.

According to the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy [5], counselling is defined as a service delivered by trained counsellors or practitioners who work with people over a short or long term to help them bring about effective change or enhanced wellbeing. Again, counselling is said to be a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education and career goals. Counselling could also be said to be number of procedures used in assisting an individual in solving problems which arise in various aspects of his life or in assisting him to minimize his overall personal development so that he could be more effective, satisfied and useful to the society in which he lives [4]. Deductively, counselling is a professional services which aims at helping people adjust to their environment, acquire problem-solving skills, manage their lives effectively and live meaningfully to achieve potentialities. Therefore, modern counselling entails concerted efforts in achieving greater gains even in ugly situations. Patients often cope with diseases much like they cope with other struggles in life, so counsellors who become aware of their clients' coping skills can help them resolve their concerns and emotional pain using some of the coping tools. Counsellors may work with COVID-19 response or healthcare team in isolation centre for clinical supports services.

Counselling for COVID-19 Patients

The main objective of counselling is to give support to clients with challenges. The establishment of a relationship between a counsellor and client (patient) is crucial before counselling is attempted. This promotes the client's trust in the counsellor and he or she (the client)

will speak without reserve. Hence, this enables accurate assessment of the client's current condition. It is beneficial when setting goals with the patient.

Emotional Support: More often than not, people newly diagnosed with corona virus may have trouble accepting the diagnosis, especially in a situation where they feel physically healthy and are not experiencing any symptom of the disease. A Counselling Psychologist's role here is to help such people address emotional reactions such as disbelief, anxiety, denial, depression, anger, and learn to accept their condition.

Patients and family members often avoid conversations about terminal disease in order to protect each other from emotional pain and fear. Counsellors can help to bridge the gap between them and encourage communication about emotional, spiritual and cultural beliefs. The purpose of the counsellor working with the ill is to listen to the patients with empathy and understanding helping them to find psychological and emotional peace. Carl Rogers, an influential psychologist in America who founded Client-centered therapy believed that counsellors should show clients unconditional positive regard, which is an empathic understanding and total acceptance of where the client is on his or her journey [6]. Once a patient believes the counsellor is listening non-judgmentally, he feels encouraged and secure to openly talk about his fears and concerns.

Counselling for Self-care: Patients who benefit from counselling tend to be motivated for, and in self-care. Self-care includes a broad spectrum. According to World Health Organization [7], Self-Care in health refers to the activities individuals, families and communities undertake with the intention of enhancing health, preventing disease, limiting illness, and restoring health. Self-care encompasses several issues including hygiene, nutrition, lifestyle, environmental and socio-economic factor. Promotion of self-care is a means to empower individuals, families and communities for informed health decision making. These activities are derived from knowledge and skills from the pool of both professional and lay experience. They are undertaken by lay people on their own behalf, either separately or in participative collaboration with professionals.

Sexual Health Counselling: Sexual Health is a core part of a person's general well-being. Corona virus infection can affect aspect of human sexuality and as such, counselling should integrate sexual health as an integral part; and should address the physical, psychological, social

and personal aspects of sexuality in a culturally sensitive issue and sexual health counselling must be approached with due consideration to client's privacy and confidentiality.

Counselling the Aged: In many countries the prevalence rate of corona virus cases increases significantly with age. As people age, their ability to cope with living, to learn new information and remain independent varies greatly. Older people with corona virus may have more disabilities, compared to younger people with the virus. Within the health care, physicians and other caregivers may be less likely to offer particular medical treatments to older patients because of a belief that certain ailments are the inevitable consequences of natural aging.

Lifestyle Counselling: A greater number of corona virus infected person may often find it challenging, if not outright depressing, to make the lifestyle change necessary to stay healthy. Lifestyle management involves weight reduction in the obese or overweight patient. This is usually difficult for most patients and imposes a psychological burden on them. A lack of understanding of the disease by their peers, colleagues, and family members also makes it difficult for them to adjust to their new situation. Through behavior modification, counsellors can help patients/clients change behaviours to gradually improve eating habits, activity levels and overall outlook.

Implication of Counselling on Social Well-being of Covid-19 Patients

Corona virus makes many demands on lifestyle and poses debilitating and life-threatening complications which overall have a negative impact on a patient's well-being and social life. In a developing nation with poor healthcare and social support systems, the economic consequences of being infected with corona virus can be enormous for the patient, leading to inadequate care and the subsequent development of complications. The stresses and demands of living with corona virus affect interpersonal and social relationships. Hence, counselling should be made available for corona virus infected person to enhance social well-being and improve quality of life.

Counselling support helps a suffering patient free himself from all forms of tension and negative feelings, to express their fear, anxiety and sorrow and give rise to hope. It stimulates the patient to fight actively, replacing passivity, helplessness and resignation. It gives the suffering person the strength to fight for survival on grounds of building positivity. Counselling can improve the quality of life for corona virus patients and as such, the disease will in no way impede their social functioning and general well-being.

Helping patients to find purpose and meaning in their life is beneficial in reducing death anxiety in the patient and their relatives. Even when death is expected, the family can be assisted to adjust to the bad news and seek avenues to make the best use of available lifetime. Members in a support group can share similar experiences, learn from each other and teach each other how to handle situations that arise with family, pain, medical concerns, and other areas that concern their well-being.

Conclusion

Corona virus is a lifelong disease that may not go away soon. Counsellors working with corona virus works in a multidisciplinary team to provide support and comfort, helping these individuals live normal and fulfilling lives.

Recommendations

Isolation Centres around the world that manage corona virus patients should set up counselling centers to assist patients in receiving help from trained counsellors to promote psychosocial well-being. Thus we know, plays a key role in healing process.

Counsellors must further educate themselves and seek out opportunities for personal growth, as well as training and the best counselling practices for corona virus patients.

Religious institutions should be made to understand the role of counselling in managing clients. Hence, they should encourage corona virus members to seek counselling.

Government and organized private sector should invest reasonable resources in counselling of corona virus patients to enhance their well being.

Due to the growing importance of counselling in the society. Educational institutions should include counselling in their learning and teaching curriculum.

Isolation centers should set up intercom to assist patients in isolation received emotional supports and from family and friends during this period.

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