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Health Care Workers on the Front Lines

Health care providers across the country are falling ill and being quarantined after exposure to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that at least 9,282 health care workers in the U.S. have contracted the coronavirus, leading to 27 deaths, between February 12 and April 9.

Health care workers are expected to experience a disproportionate share of infections during the current pandemic. The risks that accompany caring for infectious, seriously ill people during a pandemic are nearly impossible to avoid. In the Lombardy region of Italy, 20 percent of health care providers have been infected with the virus. In China, as of February 24, 3,387 health care providers were infected.

Researchers at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) are conducting an online research study to learn about how stressors related to the COVID-19 pandemic affect the mental health of health care workers over time. Participation involves completing online questionnaires every one to three months for 12 months. If you are interested in participating, please go to covidhcwstudy.ctss.nih.gov.

In response to a request of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, the National Academies released a rapid expert consultation reviewing current resources and methods for tracking and evaluating health care worker deaths related to COVID-19 in the health care setting. This rapid expert consultation also examines some ways to support health care worker well-being and safety during the pandemic.

The following list links to stories of health care professionals – the individuals essential to combatting the current pandemic and maintaining public health – who have contracted the disease.

Seattle, Wash. – Dr. Stephen Schwartz, **pathologist** and professor at the University of Washington, has died after contracting COVID-19. It is unclear how he contracted the virus.

Kirkland, Wash. – An **emergency room physician** in his 40s at EvergreenHealth Medical Center has contracted COVID-19 and is in stable but critical condition. The doctor used personal protective equipment (PPE) and it is not known whether he acquired the virus in the community or at work.

Nashville, Tenn. – Vanderbilt University Medical Center has confirmed that "less than 20 employees" have tested positive for COVID-19. According to CEO Jeff Balser, M.D., they believe none became infected through patient contact and all have quarantined at their homes.

Washington State; Paterson, N.J. – Two **emergency room physicians** in their 40s and 70s are hospitalized in critical condition with COVID-19. It is unclear whether they were infected at their hospitals or in their communities.

Pittsfield, Mass. – More than 160 employees of Berkshire Medical Center are quarantined in their homes after exposure to patients who tested positive for the virus. The medical center has hired 54 temporary nurses

specializing in medical/surgical, intensive care, and emergency services. The medical center remains in need of five respiratory therapists and two radiology technicians.

Baltimore, Md. – A provider has tested positive for COVID-19 at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Philadelphia, Pa. – St. Christopher's Hospital for Children has closed its intensive-care unit to new patients and closed its Level 1 trauma unit after one of its physicians tested positive for the virus. A Children's Hospital of Philadelphia **cardiologist** at the King of Prussia campus has also been hospitalized with coronavirus. The hospital was forced to temporarily shut down its cardiology office and adjacent clinic.

Bridgeport, Conn. – Officials have reported that a **community physician** from New York State has tested positive for the virus after having made rounds at Bridgeport Hospital.

White Plains, N.Y. – A doctor at Maple Medical has tested positive for COVID-19.

Lancaster, Pa. – An independent health care worker at Lancaster General Hospital has tested positive for COVID-19.

Santa Cruz, Calif. – A 36-year-old **emergency medical technician** has tested positive for the virus.

Georgia – A 48-year-old health care worker at Donalsonville Hospital in southwestern Georgia has died after testing positive for COVID-19, the same day a **mammogram technician** at Piedmont Newnan Hospital was found dead in her Coweta County home. Laboratory tests have confirmed the woman had COVID-19.

Elmhurst, N.Y. – In a video published by The New York Times, an **emergency room doctor** provides a harrowing look inside a hospital in the current epicenter of the nation's outbreak.

Detroit, Mich. – Lisa Ewald, Henry Ford Hospital **nurse**, Debbie Accad, Detroit VA Medical Center **nurse**, and James House, Omni Continuing Care **nurse**, have died after falling ill from COVID-19.

New York, N.Y. – Frank Gabin, **emergency room physician**, became the first ER doctor in the U.S. known to have died as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

New York, N.Y. – Lorna Breen, **emergency room physician**, died by suicide on April 26. Dr. Breen was the medical director of the emergency department at NewYork-Presbyterian Allen Hospital and was on the front line of treating coronavirus patients.

New York, N.Y. – **Emergency medical technician** John Mondello committed suicide after three months on the job. Mondello had spoken to friends about experiencing anxiety stemming from the pandemic.

In a MedPage Today survey of health care workers, 19 percent of respondents said that 1-5 percent of their colleagues were missing work, 10 percent said 6-10 percent of their colleagues were out, and 4 percent estimated that 11-19 percent of their colleagues were out. These proportions were significantly higher for those working in New York City.

The New York Times has created a series to tell the stories of people who have died in the pandemic. It includes obituaries of Gita Ramjee, a leading **AIDS researcher**, Dr. John Murray, a **pioneering lung expert**, Dr. James Goodrich, **pediatric neurosurgeon**, Dr. Roberto Stella, Italian **general practitioner**, and Kious Kelly, a New York

City **nurse**. The Times has also created "In Harm's Way" – an outlet for health care workers to reflect on what they have witnessed, the decisions they have made, and how the pandemic has changed them. They will continue adding the stories of frontline health care workers should you wish to submit yours.

MedPage Today has also created an In Memoriam to highlight the names of U.S. health care workers who have died while working on the front lines of the pandemic.

Kaiser Health News has begun its own documentation of the lives of health care workers in the U.S. who have died from COVID-19. "Lost on the Frontline," a collaboration between KHN and The Guardian, has identified 922 such workers as of August 11 who likely died of COVID-19 after helping patients during the pandemic.