

Issue #2
20 April 2020



Preserving Women's Health COVID-19 Newsletter

NAVY MEDICINE FEMALE FORCE READINESS CLINICAL COMMUNITY (FFRCC)

The FFRCC developed this Newsletter with the purpose of supporting providers amidst emerging challenges related to COVID-19 and ensuring the continuous delivery of quality care to active duty service women under current circumstances. Please provide any further information, best practices, or resources to address patient and provider needs during this time to the BUMED Office of Women's Health.

Disclaimer: Any mention of commercial services or applications is provided as a matter of common interest and is not intended as an endorsement.

01. PROVIDER RESILIENCY

Recent pandemic outbreaks have shown that **first responders** and **front-line medical personnel are likely to sustain high levels of psychiatric symptoms**, most prominently those seen in Acute Stress Disorder and anxiety disorders. Ensuring providers have access to mental health support can improve patient experiences and health outcomes by promoting the resiliency and wellbeing of their care team. Early intervention can help mitigate the overall severity of potential mental health outcomes such as provider burnout or trauma. Naval Medical Center San Diego has created the **Resiliency Support Team (ReST)** to **address mounting stress on healthcare workers due to COVID-19**. ReST aims to **support the clinical well-being of providers** through measures such as repurposing under-utilized spaces to be ReSToration Rooms in the hospital for staff members to stop in for a respite, offering peer support with staff psychiatrics, and sharing information on wraparound services such as local food delivery and availability of childcare. See more information on ReST at [this website](#).

Healthcare personnel should consider using the [Provider Resilience](#) app, a military-specific app that aids healthcare providers when they are **dealing with burnout** and **compassion fatigue**.

02. TELEHEALTH DURING COVID-19

The Navy **Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED)** has established a **hotline for questions related to COVID-19**. Call 703-681-1087 for questions on topics such as policy or implementation of telehealth resources.

For the COVID-19 response, the **Nurse Advice Line (NAL)** is able to schedule 24HR virtual appointments at all medical treatment facilities (MTFs). The **NAL** is available 24/7 for all TRICARE beneficiaries and is being used as a **source of triage and advice for COVID-19**. The NAL can be accessed by calling 1-800-TRICARE or visiting [this website](#).

The Defense Health Agency (DHA) has established **guidance for the use of telehealth tools** in a tiered system. Existing tools such as telephone care, the NAL, and secure messaging are foundational Tier 1 tools. There are **four progressively higher tiers of COVID-19 virtual care**; please see the **DHA Virtual Health Guidance** document on [SharePoint](#) for more information.

03. MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Living through a pandemic **increases challenges to mental health** through isolation, financial insecurity, reduced access to usual coping strategies, and disrupted routines. **More women than men are reporting substantial psychological distress during the COVID-19 pandemic.** Women are disproportionately facing concerns about how COVID-19 may affect their **pregnancy, parenting and childcare**, or situations of **intimate partner violence (IPV)**. Providers are encouraged to communicate ways of adapting usual coping skills to new circumstances.

While it is important to stay connected, a **constant stream of news about COVID-19 will likely increase anxiety and worry.** The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends getting the facts from legitimate resources and limiting information-seeking to specific times during the day. In addition, it is important to stay connected and maintain communication with your social networks. Healthcare workers and leaders need to pay attention to their own emotional needs and stress levels. Be sure to **stay brilliant on the basics: adequate sleep, diet, exercise, and emotional/spiritual health contribute to good overall mental health.**

Consider taking advantage of **mental health apps** such as [LifeArmor](#). These military-specific resources include information on **problem solving skills to deal with stress** and assistance on topics such as depression, relationship issues, and trauma. See the [SharePoint](#) for more information.

04. REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

The [Reproductive Health Access Project](#) has a repository of resources to support clinicians working to maintain access to reproductive care during the pandemic. Find information [here](#) on **no-touch treatment options for contraception, early pregnancy loss, and ectopic pregnancy.**

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the American Society for Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology (ASCCP) has **released interim guidance on timing of diagnostic and treatment procedures for cervical cancer screening tests.** Individuals with low-grade cervical cancer screening tests may postpone diagnostic evaluations for 6-12 months. Please see [ASCCP's website](#) for more detailed guidance. Providers should **continue use of tracking protocols** to ensure that patients with abnormal results may be called in when the concerns for COVID-19 diminish to the point that routine care for non-essential issues may be reinstated.

FURTHER RESOURCES

As we weather the impact of COVID-19, it is of utmost importance that we continue to work together as a community to ensure continued provision of critical women's healthcare and share best practices to promote wellbeing. In addition to the articles and guidance summarized within this newsletter, there are more resources available on the FFRCC SharePoint Site, found [here](#).

