

COVID-19 Social Work Scope and Intervention in A Tertiary Care Hospital

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ABSTRACT

The novel coronavirus has hit the routine life of the people crossing countries and not spared anyone in existence. In terms of screening and treatment of the infected a multidisciplinary team in full force is working around the world. Social Work, a profession that has an understanding of the psychosocial intricacies of people is also at the frontline. In this article, the author who himself a Medical Social Worker attempts to elicit the scope and possible interventions for the COVID-19 victims.

Keywords: COVID-19, Medical Social Worker, Screening, Counselling.

1 Introduction

Covid-19, the change maker of the earth ever-known is treating the World men equally in terms of infection and it is pandemic in right word. However, it has brought in unique situations and challenges in terms of individual's ability to cope up with the disease (Duan & Zhu, 2020; Liana et al,2020). This includes one's knowledge on the disease, acceptance of the fact, and ability to adapt the situation and go further (Manteuffel et al, 2013; Sharon et al, 2013). Generally, people are known with situations when they get sick and the way they get it handled is much experienced. Whereas now, the situation is unique and one doesn't know what it is, how it is and how long and there is hundreds of questions to be answered. Before arriving to a complete picture of it, the infected is admitted and sometimes discharged too. In this article, the author who has worked with the screening team of COVID-19 brings out the scope and intervention of social work profession.

2 The Scenario

COVID-19 is worldwide and every country is prioritized its diagnosis and intervention as the most needed aspect beyond its political, economic and social priorities. The screening for COVID-19 varies from country to country depending upon the health infrastructure. With respect to India, the country is striving at its best to make all possibilities to screen the population in a rapid manner. The potential population is identified through reported cases and taken for screening. Mostly this is done hospital based and the suspect has to report to the nearby health care facility designated by the government (www.mohfw.gov.in). To keep the pace, the suspects are assisted with the transport facility and guarded until the results declared. A screening triage in a hospital is the one where all suspected patients are taken for detailed assessment and authorized for the testing. Even though the criteria for testing are not drastically changing on a daily basis, it's called for a review when needed with the presentation of symptoms doesn't warrant a chance to test. The testing is done for suspects with the consent for the same and they are being retained in the health care facility area until the results arrive. Based on the result, a Positive patient is admitted and a Negative result taken people in to self-quarantine or an institution-based quarantine depending upon the individual (www.mohfw.gov.in).

3 Staff Pattern and the Structure of Health Care Facility

A screening team comprises of a medical team, nursing, medical social worker, medical record technician, disinfection team, and a security guard. The national guidelines in establishing the infrastructure of the screening triage is strictly followed. The areas are designated as waiting area, assessment area, testing zone, suspect admission ward, positive patients' wards including an ICU for sick patients.

4 The Screening Process

With the required personal protection safety measures, each suspected patient is sent in in an organized manner by the Security from the waiting area. On the entry of every person, the Medical Social Worker addresses them and explains them the Screening process in the language they can understand and make them comfortable in further process. The hospital registration is mandatory and a comprehensive case record is created by the Medical Record Technician with the socio-demographic details of every patient and an exclusive Hospital number identity is assigned. Every suspect is interviewed in detail as per the standard screening assessment form by the Medical Team and based on the criteria for testing, appropriate decision is made. When Testing is not required, again the Medical Social Worker explains in simple language and ensures the medical advice is understood and accepted. The Quarantine advice is given and reassured the medical advice by the Medical Social Worker whenever it is indicated by the Medical Team. In case of a Potential suspected patient is identified, testing is advised by the Medical Team. Medical Social Worker gives Pre-test counseling to the suspects and required consent is taken for testing. After testing, either the individual is admitted in the Suspect ward or made wait in the designated Waiting area depending upon the severity of the symptoms. This is again reassured by the Medical Social Worker. On the arrival of the result, it is conveyed first by the medical team to the tested individual. On a Negative result, the Medical Social Worker counsels the individual the required quarantine measures to be followed and reassure the medical advice. On a Positive result, the patient is taken for admission which is also initially conveyed by the Medical Team and Medical Social Worker gives the pre-admission counseling to the patient.

5 Scope for Social Work Interventions

The individuals when identified as Suspects of COVID-19 itself succumb to enormous psychosocial trauma. Besides the testing and posttest aspects, they are in huge confusion about their position in their existing role and the impact that is expected on the life routine (1,2,10). The suspects when transported through an Ambulance to the health care facility is definitely an unusual situation which they never landed in. until they reach the hospital for testing and a clear picture of the screening process is explained, they are in utter confusion and fear of everything. Although it varies from individuals, certainly a sufficient trauma is experienced by everyone irrespective of gender, education and other social parameters (6,10). Until they reach the Desk of the Medical Social Worker, different kinds of emotions float in their mind. Hence, the primary role of the Medical Social Worker, here is to ensure the comfort of the suspected individual for COVID-19 screening. A quick psychosocial assessment is made by the Medical Social Worker, to understand the level of knowledge and adaptability of the individual in the given situation. Based on the assessment, required Health education is delivered to make the individual understand the presence of him/her in the COVID-19 screening facility. Similarly, after the screening assessment by the Medical Team, pre-test and post-test counseling is given accordingly. This is continued after the declaration of the results by the Medical Team and according to a Positive or Negative result appropriate counseling is rendered. Hence from the intake of a suspected individual for COVID-19 till the results, the Medical Social Worker keeps the tested individuals informed and counseled accordingly.

Besides the individual, the family members are also floundering around about the situation. Sometimes, the whole family is inducted for screening and the challenges in such situation is much complex than with the single individual tested (Roberts AR,2005 & Xiang et al, 2020). For instance, among the tested family the mother of two young kids become positive and the father has to take back the kids home and handle them

in the absence of the mother which he never used to do. An old couple was tested where the wife was positive and admitted for further management and all of a sudden, the husband felt deserted and has to handle his life alone until his better-off returns home. A couple was admitted and has to leave the two-year-old kid to a neighbor because of no immediate relatives around. In such situations, the Social Work intervention is crucial in addressing the intricate aspects of the patient and their family (Page et al, 2016 & Dower et al, 2013). The Medical crisis has impounded the families and puts them in inexplicable trauma and suffering which only a Social Work Professional can able to understand and intervene (Judd & Sheffield 2010; Jay et al 2020; Lunn et al, 2020). Again, a Negative result do definitely call for Social Work Intervention in terms of individual's ability to understand the Quarantine measures and readiness to adapt the expected change in his/her routine life. A periodical telephonic reassurance and counseling is needed for susceptible individuals by the Medical Social Worker.

The role of the Medical Social Worker in COVID-19 is not structured only to the screening aspects whereas they have to concentrate on the logistics and coordination of all health care workers in delivering the expected service to the individuals (Keefe et al 2009). At times, Medical Social Worker assists the Medical Record Technicians whenever there is a lacuna in recording the required Socio-demographic details. These details are crucial in contact tracing and hence the intervention of Medical Social Worker in eliciting the appropriate information from the suspects is essential. During the Screening assessment by the Medical Team there are certain times where the Suspects do resist cooperating, and in such situations the Medical Social Worker through appropriate reassurance techniques appease the situation and sync the suspect with the Medical Team in a comfortable manner. There are patients who were really scared of the Health care team's PPE and their attire and showed complete reluctance to cooperate. The Medical Social Worker who is in less scary attire makes them understand the need for such atmosphere and relieves the suspect's tensions towards it. There were also situations where on a mixed result like, husband negative and wife positive, the acceptance and denial of it varied from individuals. The Medical Social Worker intervened in such situations and ensured the individuals about the nature of the disease and infection dimensions.

6 Conclusion

The presence of a Medical Social Worker in a COVID-19 Screening facility is justified with the need for interventions to handle the unpredicted behavior and presentations by the suspects. Unlike the known diseases and the much familiar health care aspects, COVID-19 draws a unique experience not only by the general population but also by the Health Care Workers. A Medical Social Worker who has the knowledge and practice of such weird situations is definitely a bridge in connecting these two World in better ways. Besides ensuring the suspects on the health care facility functioning aspects, the Medical Social Worker parallelly confirming the Medical Team the nature of the individual they are dealing with. For which the psychosocial assessment in a quicker yet in a professional manner is done by the Medical Social Worker. The success of a treatment process lies in the level of understanding from the stakeholders. Without the cooperation from the suspects it is very difficult to complete the screening process. Health education, a basic but effective tool of Medical Social Work Practice achieves this and allows the screening process to initiate in an inclusive manner. The most important aspect of Medical Social Work Intervention, is the Counselling at each phase of the Screening. At every stage of it, there are expected and unexpected scope and challenges to be addressed by the Medical Social Worker. Hence, Counselling sails through the Screening Process conjointly. The role and scope for social work intervention is enormous and when it is rightly addressed and acknowledged, the Medical Social Worker is an indispensable professional in the COVID-19 Health care Facility team.

7 Competing Interests

The Author declared that no conflict of interest exists in this publication.

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