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ACER's Dr. Carol North Publishes Article on Mental Health and COVID-19

DALLAS, TX – An [article](#) recently published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and co-authored by Carol North, M.D., medical director, Altshuler Center for Education & Research (ACER) at Metrocare, cites major stressors during COVID-19 as likely contributors for widespread emotional distress and increased risk for psychiatric illness.

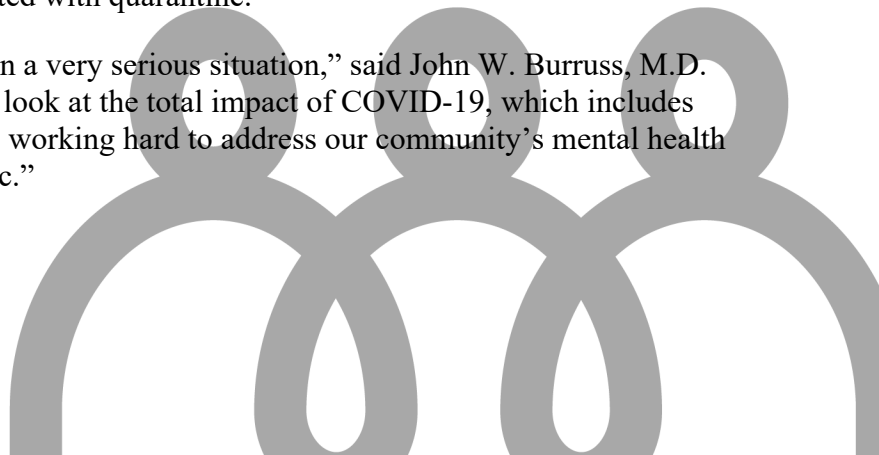
Uncertain prognoses, severe resource shortages and unfamiliar public health measures are included in the list of major stressors. North's article was written in conjunction with Betty Pfefferbaum, M.D., J.D. a psychiatrist at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine.

“The current pandemic can be expected to leave few members of the population psychologically unscathed,” said North. “Fortunately, most people will not succumb to major psychiatric illness accompanying the spread of coronavirus through our communities, but emotional distress can be expected to be widespread and deeply painful for many people before it is over.”

According to North and Pfefferbaum, some population groups may be more vulnerable to the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 than others. Those who contract the disease, individuals in high risk groups and health care providers are among those who may be more susceptible to emotional distress and illness.

The article goes on to cite a recent review of the effects on quarantined people and health care providers in earlier disease outbreaks, which revealed stress, depression, irritability, insomnia, fear, confusion, anger, frustration, boredom, and stigma associated with quarantine.

“We've known for some time now that we are in a very serious situation,” said John W. Burruss, M.D. CEO, Metrocare. “It is important to take a hard look at the total impact of COVID-19, which includes the state of mental health. At Metrocare, we are working hard to address our community's mental health needs during and long past the current pandemic.”





NEWS

Prevention efforts are necessary to combat mental health issues stemming from the pandemic. In particular, North advises taking precautions like mental health screenings, psychoeducation for healthcare providers, and psychosocial support for at-risk groups. For first responders and health care professionals, health care systems should monitor stress levels of their workers and make appropriate changes. Self-care for providers, including mental health care providers, involves seeking professional assistance when necessary, among other methods.

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About Metrocare Services

Metrocare is the largest provider of mental health services in North Texas, serving more than 60,000 adults and children annually. For over 50 years, Metrocare has provided a broad array of services to people with mental health challenges and developmental disabilities. In addition to behavioral health care, Metrocare provides primary care centers for adults and children, services for veterans and their families, accessible pharmacies, housing and supportive social services. Alongside the clinical care, researchers and teachers from Metrocare's Altshuler Center for Education & Research are advancing mental health beyond Dallas County while providing critical workforce to the state. For more information, visit metrocareservices.org or call 214-743-1200. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

