



UMB News

Face To Face: COVID-19 And Clinician Burnout

June 25, 2020 | By [Alex Likowski](#)

Consider the words of Eileen McStay, an ER nurse at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City back in March: "I have worked the last four days, and I have cried every day. I haven't had a hug in seven days, not from my kids. Not from my parents. And it kills me."

Now granted, the rate of infection in many states - like Maryland - has been slowing. But in the most populous states - California, Texas and Florida - it's on the rise again, and the trauma suffered by thousands of clinicians all over the country has already taken its toll.



Patricia Attman, Bruce Jarrell, and Delia Chiramonte

They've been overworked, isolated, poorly nourished, sleep deprived and

underappreciated.

They live with the fear of contracting the disease or bringing it home to loved ones. And many have experienced a sense of helplessness, unable to provide adequate care or comfort to COVID-19 patients when they've needed it most.

A study published in the journal *General Hospital Psychiatry* found New York clinicians showed high levels of stress, anxiety and depression, especially among those with the greatest amount of patient interaction.

More than half had high levels of acute stress and experienced insomnia.

Nearly half screened positive for depressive symptoms.

And about a third had anxiety.

The study also points up a concern that prolonged acute stress may lead to post-traumatic stress syndrome.

Worse still is the prospect of increasing “deaths of despair” – deaths due to drug or alcohol overdose, or suicide brought on by the pressures of COVID-19. Probably the most widely publicized case is that of Dr. Lorna Breen, emergency department medical director at New York Presbyterian Allen hospital who died by suicide in late April.

So, what is being done and what can be done to provide the care that our care providers so clearly need?

Joining UMB Interim President **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**, on the June 25th edition of Virtual Face to Face with Dr. Bruce Jarrell were **Patricia Attman, MD**, clinical assistant professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of Maryland School of Medicine; and Delia Chiriamonte, MD, MS, medical director of integrative and palliative medicine and co-chair of the physician wellness committee at the Greater Baltimore Medical Center.

Watch the entire program by accessing the link above.

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