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Prevalence of stress, anxiety and depression and their association with coping mechanisms among primary healthcare doctors in Petaling District, Selangor, during the transition to the endemic phase of COVID-19: A cross-sectional study

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Abstract

Introduction: Following Malaysia's transition to the endemic phase of COVID-19, primary healthcare doctors (PHDs) experienced a substantial increase in workload, which combined with workforce shortages and continued exposure to infection risk, contributed to sustained psychological distress among PHDs. Assessing the mental health status and coping strategies of healthcare professionals during the recovery phase is essential to ensure the continuity of national healthcare services.

Methods: This cross-sectional study assessed the prevalence of stress, anxiety and depression among

PHDs in private and public primary care clinics in Petaling, Selangor. It also analysed the relationship between these mental health conditions and coping mechanisms over 5 months. Self-administered questionnaires containing sociodemographic items, as well as English versions of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21) and Brief COPE were utilised. Multiple logistic regression was applied to determine the associated factors of depression, anxiety and stress. Results: A total of 230 participants were included. The median age was 35 years. The prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress was 28.7%, 23.0% and 20.4% respectively. Workplace conflict was significantly associated with higher odds of depression (AOR=2.497; 95% CI=1.230–5.070), anxiety (AOR=5.337; 95% CI=2.329–12.232) and stress (AOR=3.078; 95% CI=1.339–7.075). Avoidant coping strategies were associated with higher odds of depression (AOR=2.743; 95% CI=1.150–6.544) and anxiety (AOR=5.776; 95% CI=2.010–16.598). Conclusion: Current trends underscore the need to implement evidence-based coping strategies that directly address underlying factors contributing to depression and anxiety. Additional targeted interventions are required to improve the mental health of physicians post COVID-19 pandemic. © 2026, Academy of Family Physicians of Malaysia. All rights reserved.

Author keywords

Anxiety; Coping skills; COVID-19; Depression; Primary healthcare

Indexed keywords

EMTREE medical terms

adult; anxiety; Article; Brief COPE Inventory; consultation; coping; coronavirus disease 2019; cross-sectional study; depression; female; household income; human; human experiment; Likert scale; male; mental stress; physician; prevalence; primary health care; questionnaire; self concept; work experience; workplace

Device trade names

Commercial names given to devices, used for branding and differentiation in the market, commonly referenced in scientific and clinical research.

Tradename	Country	Manufacturer
IBM Statistical Package for the Social Science version 27.0	United States	IBM

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