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Vanuatu health care workers' attitudes to COVID-19 during community outbreak

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Abstract

Background: The Vanuatu Ministry of Health declared a community transmission of COVID-19 on March 4th, 2022. From 2020, the Mental Health Team conducted awareness sessions for Health Care Workers (HCWs) Team Leads on what to expect from teams before, during and after a community outbreak. Here we collected HCW responses from a survey for more insight.

Methods: A 24-questions online survey using Google Forms was sent to HCWs during the community outbreak in March 2022. Answers to these questions were grouped into four (4) thematic areas and analysed: 1. Knowledge and Access to information and resources 2. HCW's Confidence and Perception towards COVID-19 3. Stigma 4. Mental Wellbeing.

Results: Of the total eligible respondents (n=58), about half got information regarding COVID-19 from Ministry of Health updates. They requested more information on managing COVID-19 patients because they felt they did not have enough training to look after a COVID-19 patient. HCWs expressed increased confidence through training on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use and self-administering COVID-19 rapid antigen test. HCWs think that wearing an N95 mask protects them from the virus but feel there was insufficient PPE made available to them and therefore use other forms of treatment to protect themselves against COVID-19. Despite the increased hours of work performed by HCW, half of the respondents were conscious of and practiced self-care. Many experienced stigmas as HCWs and expressed their greatest fear of transmitting the virus to their family.

Discussion: Although this survey provides insights into Vanuatu HCWs concerns, attitudes, and challenges during the COVID-19 community outbreak, it highlights essential areas for HCW Team Leaders to consider and support HCWs in so that they may be able to perform their duties effectively.