Helping Healthcare Workers Address Mental Health During COVID-19

seedkurdistan.org/helping-healthcare-workers-address-mental-health-during-covid-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a variety of challenges, not just to our physical health, but our mental health too. In Kurdistan and Iraq, mental health is a taboo topic – making people hesitant to speak about their problems or seek help from professionals. Healthcare workers in Iraq receive limited and infrequent training to recognize and treat mental health symptoms in patients.

The pandemic has also deepened financial and political crises in the region, further exacerbating people's stress, in a country already fatigued by trauma. "It isn't surprising that some patients show higher levels of stress and/or mental health symptoms and require extra support during these times. More attention to those symptoms and refreshing how to support others who struggle with stress, anxiety or other psychological challenges is necessary," says Anne Lepelaars, SEED's Mental Health Technical Advisor.

Following the videos SEED produced to support people during COVID-19 (Sorani and Badini) to manage their well-being, SEED was asked to produce videos for frontline healthcare workers in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) to increase their understanding and ability to recognize mental health symptoms, make referrals, and support people.

"Healthcare workers are under a lot of pressure during current times, and also look after patients who struggle with the COVID situation," says Lepelaars, who along with SEED's other psychologists developed the two-part series, which is available in English, Kurdish (Sorani and Badini), and Arabic.

The first video, _How to Recognize Mental Health Symptoms in Your Patient_ , is an introduction to the impact of the crisis on mental health and how it can manifest. The video teaches healthcare workers how to recognize specific mental health signs, and when and how they should refer — with special attention given to gaining the patient's consent.
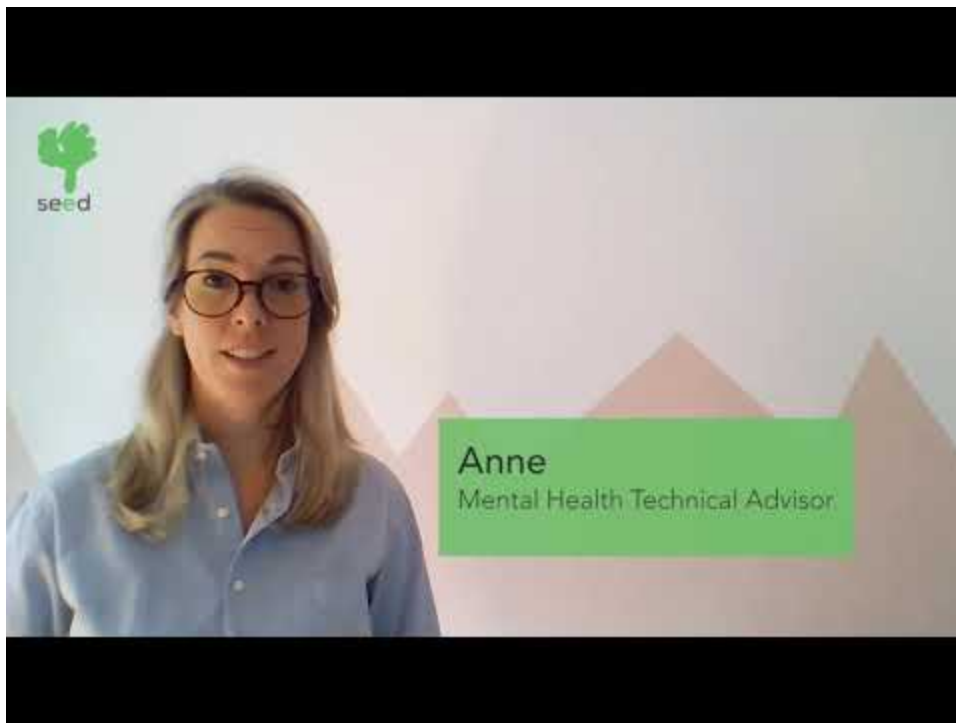
The second video, _How to Support a Patient with Mental Health Symptoms,_ provides practical ways for healthcare workers to support people experiencing mental health symptoms. SEED's psychologists offer tips for working with patients, such as: try to understand the patient and not make assumptions, give patients their full attention, and to work with patients in as quiet and private a space as possible. For patients exhibiting signs of anxiety, routines and distractions were advised as one way to cope with the uncertainty of the current situation. These could include eating and sleeping regularly, exploring hobbies,

relaxation, and simple exercise — keeping in mind social distancing requirements. The videos are supported by a poster (to be used in healthcare settings) which summarize the signs and support covered in the videos.

"This crisis has challenged how all of us have worked and provided support or training that we traditionally would have conducted in person, as it is now done via videos. This has its advantages. It means that we can reach and support a higher number of people," adds Lepelaars.

These videos are part of SEED's wider response to the crisis, we have developed a number of mental health and well-being tools which you can find on our [COVID-19 response page](#).

These resources have been developed with the support of the Government of the United States.

بادینی
سۆرانی
عربی

How to Recognize Mental Health Symptoms in Your Patients

Watch Video At: https://youtu.be/3HwttOdbzqQ

How to Support a Patient with Mental Health Symptoms

Watch Video At: https://youtu.be/cQixPilIdZw

Other languages

-

Watch Video At: https://youtu.be/zZdccGfB7OI

-

Watch Video At: https://youtu.be/5JhoJzQqyJ4

-

Watch Video At: https://youtu.be/cCKuOPExZT4