

# How to help healthcare staff bounce back after the pandemic

Submitted by: BlueSky Education

Monday, 29 March 2021

---

Healthcare staff are working relentlessly under heavy psychological and physical distress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, new research from the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University (RSM) shows consistency in healthcare teams increases efficiency and reduces deaths.

The feelings of failure healthcare staff experience as they care for severely sick patients with high death rates are like nothing they have experienced before, which is why research to help hospital managers mitigate the impact of negative experiences of medical staff, such as patient deaths, has been carried out by Dr Ioannis Fragkos of Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University (RSM), Dr Emmanouil Avgerinos of IE Business School, Madrid and Prof. Bilal Gokpinar of UCL School of Management.

The researchers used a simulated model to compare a 'normal' rotation policy for team members against a policy that avoids pairing the lead surgeon with less familiar team members. The results showed an almost 30 per cent reduction in the length of hospital stay for patients operated on by a lead surgeon that had recently experienced failure, but only if the surgeon was paired with a familiar team.

The hospital data studied in the simulation also implied a reduction of three days in the total length of stay per patient.

According to Dr Ioannis Fragkos

"With hospital beds being a limited resource, hospital managers should be alert to this hidden impact of patient deaths. Not only do patients' deaths affect healthcare staff mentally; they also lead to reduced performance during subsequent surgeries on other patients, which then extends in-hospital stays of those other patients.

"Put into numbers, our study suggests that just one recent patient death experience for a surgical team can increase in-hospital stays for the teams' subsequent patients by 44 per cent, which translates to around 4.6 days. The consequences could be significant for the deployment of a hospital's critical resources.

"Healthcare managers who recognise how failures impact productivity in the long term will still see failures as learning opportunities. Such leaders understand that team members who together experience failures can develop more meaningful familiarity with each other, which ultimately improves their productivity."

The research shows that effective leaders should protect the members of healthcare teams and their organisation from the psychological effects – and the operational ramifications – that come in the aftermath of the death of a patient by keeping teams as stable as possible when times are hard.

These findings come from examining more than 4,000 detailed cases from cardiac surgery operations.

For more information, a copy of the research paper, or to speak with the researchers, contact Kate Mowbray at BlueSky PR on [Kate@bluesky-pr.com](mailto:Kate@bluesky-pr.com) or call +44 710022871