



COVID-19 UPDATE

COVID-19 GROUP DEBRIEFING GUIDELINE POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

This guideline outlines the process to follow should the need for trauma counselling of a team or multiple teams be identified after a hospital has been impacted by an event on a major scale due to COVID-19.

The diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) should be made by a trained **Clinical Psychologist** or a **Psychiatrist** in the mental health field. This Post-Traumatic Stress debriefing process is NOT intended to diagnose or treat PTSD. Rather it is concerned with addressing the distress individuals and teams feel after experiencing a traumatic event. In addition, it can assist in identifying individuals who may need additional psychological support.



Traumatic stress is caused by experiencing shocking and emotionally overwhelming situations that may involve actual threat, serious injury, or a threat to physical integrity. A variety of emotional disturbances and symptoms are associated with traumatic stress that cause clinically significant distress or impairment in the person's social interactions, their ability to work, or other important areas of functioning.

Identifying the need for a group debriefing

- The need for such intervention should be evaluated by the hospital management team and if required, organised via the HRBP.
- There may also be instances whereby the Regional Management team identifies the need and advises the hospital to implement the process.

Sourcing the facilitator for the group debriefing

- The HRBP needs to arrange a trauma counsellor through INCON.
- In the case that there is not a suitable INCON counsellor available, the HRBP can contact the Organisational Effectiveness Manager, Megan Buhagiar, at Corporate Office, to source assistance from the Mediclinic preferred list of additional available counsellors, including the trained counsellors who have offered their services as volunteers for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There may be a cost involved for the facilitation of the debriefing session/s. In this instance, the HGM should be consulted. Approval of the costs by the HGM will be required before any sessions are confirmed.
- The appointed facilitator should utilise an approach that aligns with the Mediclinic guideline.
- The sessions should ideally be conducted as face-to-face sessions (being cognisant of social distancing protocols). However, owing to the current circumstances, it is acceptable if counselling sessions are conducted via technology (e.g. Zoom or Skype) where face-to-face is not a viable option.

Overview of the post-traumatic stress debriefing process:

The Mediclinic process is reflected below:

Management Team	Impacted/ Struggling Teams	Other Teams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief of management team • Management team members that need additional support must be referred for personal counselling • Management team should identify both impacted and struggling teams in the hospital • The “how are you feeling” emotions thermometer tool should be used to monitor if the intervention was sufficient, or if further intervention is required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief of each affected team • Team members that need additional support must be referred for personal counselling • The “how are you feeling” emotions thermometer tool should be used to monitor if the intervention was sufficient or if further intervention is required • HRBP needs to monitor each affected team closely for at least 4 weeks after the debriefing intervention (refer to the monitoring principles outlined below) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All teams in the hospital should be offered the opportunity to have a debriefing session • The “how are you feeling” emotions thermometer tool should be used to monitor if these teams develop a need for intervention

Guiding counselling principles for debriefing during the COVID-19 crisis:

- Crisis (trauma) counselling is intended to be quite brief, generally lasting for a period of no longer than a few weeks. It is important to note that crisis counselling is not psychotherapy.

- Crisis intervention is focused on minimising the stress of the event, providing emotional support and improving the individual's coping strategies in the here and now.
- The counsellor must start the sessions by actively listening to the team members, asking questions and determining what they need to cope effectively with the crisis.
- The sessions must aim to reduce fear, anxiety and avoidance behaviour. The counsellor should assist the team members by having them identify and confront the thoughts, feelings, or situations that they fear.
- The counsellor must try and change unhealthy thoughts, feelings, responses and behaviours.
- The debriefing should also aim to help the team see that they will eventually return to normal functioning, even if the current situation seems both dire and endless.
- In addition to providing support, crisis counsellors should also help the team members to develop coping skills to deal with the immediate crisis. This might involve helping them by recommending stress reduction techniques and encouraging positive thinking.

Monitoring principles post debriefing during the COVID-19 crisis:

- The HRBPs' first tool will be the regular and ongoing feedback obtained through the "how are you feeling" emotion thermometer session.
- This feedback should be captured using the HRBP Heat Map tool. Guidelines for which will be provided for use by the HRBPs.
- A follow-up session should be arranged with the Hospital General Manager (HGM), the HRBP and the counsellor. The purpose of which should be for the counsellor and HRBP to provide feedback to the HGM and discuss *inter alia*, the team's progress, expectations of the team, any red flags and to agree on appropriate next steps.

Additional information

For more information on the various types of psychological stresses and the types of support that are available for each level, please refer to the **Trauma Support Guidelines** which will be provided for use by the HRBPs.

Kind regards

HR Operations