COVID-19: TACKLING THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS
LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE & TROPICAL MEDICINE

WEEK 1 WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT THE OUTBREAK OF COVID-19?
STEP 1.11 PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Frequently asked questions

Question	Response from course team
What resources are available for those experiencing mental health difficulties currently?	For those experiencing concerning mental health difficulties we would advise you to contact your health care provider or mental health team (if you already have one). Mental health services have not paused their support in many settings, and many therapists are offering ongoing support through different means such as telephone, skype sessions and digital interventions. WHO has released short guidance on improving mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic and the main messages are: Limit watching or reading news about COVID-19 to one or twice a day; stay connected and maintain social networks; try as much as possible to keep personal daily routines; try to be physically active within your abilities. You can find full guidance here: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf Further guidance on mental health considerations during Covid-19 crisis can be found at the following sites: Public Health England guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing International Federation of Red cross and Red Crescent Societies psychosocial centre for psychological first aid: https://pscentre.org/archives/resource-category/covid19

What digital platforms are available to support those with mental health conditions at this time?	Digital interventions are being used widely in the NHS, in UK, with platforms (e.g. Silver Cloud) being utilised to support therapists' work remotely or as standalone treatments for a wide range of mental health issues. Digital interventions for mental health, have evidence base and have been rolled out in most of Europe, USA, Australia, etc. In a recent initiative The IFightDepression tool https://ifightdepression.com/en for example has recently launched free access to everyone experiencing low mood in Germany, Estonia, Turkey, Albania, Kosovo etc. Another great initiative comes from Inuka, offering treatment via chat, anywhere including Romania, Kenya and Zimbabwe. For Covid-19 they have made all coaches available on a 'pay what you can' basis, via https://www.inuka.io/covid19-support/, including languages such as Hindi, Kiswahili and Shona
What are the potential mental health effects of COVID-19 on healthcare workers?	Psychological issues and burnout depersonalisation are established as serious concerns for those who respond in a humanitarian crisis, and where frontline staff are responding to COVID-19 in very difficult circumstances the issues are likely to be very similar. There is an article about psychological distress in humanitarian settings here: https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0044948 We also know that health staff quarantined during the SARS epidemic had more severe symptoms of post-traumatic stress than members of the general public who were quarantined. Health care workers felt greater stigmatisation, exhibited more avoidance behaviours after quarantine, reported greater lost income, and were consistently more affected psychologically. Early evidence in relation to this for COVID-19 is coming from China, where front line staff, especially women and nurses directly caring for patients with COVID-19, are at an increased risk of suffering from psychological problems such as depression and anxiety. There is a report on this here: https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2763229