

**“Enhancing Interprofessional
Collaboration and Learning for
Strengthening Primary Health Care”**

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TUFH 2021 ABSTRACTS

Title	COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS AS A STRATEGY TO TACKLE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUFFERING DUE TO PHYSICAL DISTANCING: A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL.
Type	Oral Presentation <i>Innovative Ways for Community Mobilization and Engagement of Stakeholders</i>
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Abstract N ^o	TUFH670
Content	<p>Background During the COVID-19 pandemic some family physicians were overburdened and experienced difficulties reaching vulnerable patients and meeting the increased need for psychosocial support. This randomized controlled trial (RCT) tested whether a primary healthcare (PHC) based community health worker (CHW) intervention could tackle psychosocial suffering due to physical distancing measures in patients with limited social networks. Methods CHWs provided 8 weeks of tailored psychosocial support to the intervention group. Control group patients received ‘care as usual’. The impact on feelings of emotional support, social isolation, social participation, anxiety and fear of COVID-19 were measured longitudinally using a face-to-face survey to determine their mean change from baseline. Self-rated change in psychosocial health at 8 weeks was determined. This trial is a part of the broader Realist Evaluation approach to this CHW intervention. Results We failed to find a significant effect of the intervention on the prespecified psychosocial health measures. However, the intervention did lead to significant improvement in self-rated change in psychosocial health. Conclusion This study confirms partially the existing evidence on the effectiveness of CHW interventions as a strategy to address mental health in PHC in a COVID context. Further research is needed to elaborate the implementation of CHWs in PHC to reach vulnerable populations during and after health crises.</p>