

to permit caregivers to be paid which may suggest that these states may not have enough providers to care for the population. Lastly, the results suggest that provider supply was associated with whether a state allowed case management entities to provide direct care services. States with fewer home health agencies were more likely to allow this flexibility. Based on these results, states may be pursuing available Medicaid flexibilities to address provider and workforce shortages which existed prior to COVID-19 but have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

MODERATING EFFECTS OF LONELINESS ON COVID-19-RELATED STRESS AND ANXIETY IN MIDDLE AND LATER LIFE IN SOUTH KOREA

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Many people have suffered from psychological distress in the form of stress, loneliness, and anxiety resulting from the COVID-19 epidemic (Havnen et al., 2020; Luchetti et al., 2020). Along with these factors, physical health (hereafter health), resilience, and living arrangements as protective factors were examined. The research aims were to investigate 1) factors affecting the association between COVID-19-related stress (hereafter stress) and anxiety, and 2) moderating effects of loneliness on this association. Data was collected on 450 middle-aged and older adults (ages 45 through 76) living in South Korea during COVID-19. A multi-group path analysis was employed. Measurement invariance was examined by comparing unconstrained and fully constrained models. Both models fit. Moderating effects of loneliness existed. Stress was negatively associated with health and living arrangements for people with both higher and lower levels of loneliness. Health was positively associated with resilience for both groups. Resilience was negatively associated with anxiety for both groups. For people with higher levels of loneliness only, stress and health were negatively associated with resilience and anxiety, respectively. The association between stress and anxiety was significant for both groups. However, the impact of stress on anxiety was significantly larger for people with higher levels of loneliness than for people with lower levels of loneliness. Health practitioners and service providers should develop programs to maintain and promote resilience, social support, and good health among middle-aged and older adults in South Korea to mitigate negative mental health consequences during the pandemic.

THE IMPACT OF COVID RESTRICTIONS AMONG RATES OF FALLING IN ASSISTED LIVING RESIDENTS

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As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, assisted living group activities and congregate dining stopped and residents were confined to their rooms. While this may have kept residents safer from contracting the virus, it also reduced their physical activity levels. The aim of this study was to investigate if rates of falls in one assisted living community varied as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. We analyzed fall incident

reports from n=155 residents from October 2019 to October 2020. Results showed a total of n=802 falls in the year-long period (range of 1-30 falls per resident; mean = 5.17; SD=5.6 in the 12 month period). The majority (65%) of falls occurred in resident rooms. 55% of falls occurred between 6am and 6pm. The primary cause of these falls was loss of balance (30%). Comparing falls that occurred 5 months pre-restriction (Oct 2019-Feb 2020) with 5 months post-restriction (April 2020-August 2021) showed non-significant differences between time periods (p=.59). However, analyzing rates of falls by month showed a range of 46 - 88 falls by month with the lowest number occurring in winter months and the peak number of falls occurring in both Oct 2019 and 2020. Despite the majority of falls occurring in resident rooms, Covid restrictions of room confinement did not appear to impact the prevalence of falls in this sample. However, the seasonal variation warrants further research and those in assisted living should consider seasonal variations and proactively implement policies to prevent falls during these times.

Session 2030 (Symposium)

CHANGES IN MENTAL HEALTH, SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT, AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Chair: Wenjun Li

Discussant: Su-I Hou

The current COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly changed our behaviors and health, especially vulnerable community-dwelling older adults. This symposium includes three presentations that evaluated the pandemic's impacts on mental health, social engagement and physical activity in healthy community-living older adults and those with dementia. Dr. Wenjun Li and his team examined the pandemic impact on mental health and social engagement among relatively healthy older adults residing in suburban and rural neighborhoods in Central Massachusetts, USA. The study reported significant variations in pandemic impacts by sex, age, race, income, living arrangement, and neighborhood housing density, suggesting the pandemic has had disproportionately negative impacts on socially and economically disadvantaged vulnerable older adults. Dr. W. Quin Yow and her team evaluated the impacts of government mandated social distancing and lockdowns on older adults with dementia and their caregivers in Singapore. The study found significant increases in irritability, aggression and hallucinations among older adults with dementia, and possible deterioration of health conditions and heightened moderate level of stress. The results suggest that social distancing may have resulted in negative outcomes in this vulnerable population with dementia and their caregivers. Dr. Ladda Thiamwong reported her team's efforts on forming an international aging research collaborative to mitigate health consequences of COVID-19 crisis from the international perspective. The team consists of ten scholars from five countries, including Hong Kong, Nepal, Singapore, Thailand, and the United States. They collect data using combinations of online and face-to-face surveys. Their important findings will be discussed in detail in this symposium.