

3.M. Oral presentations: Training and education

Increasing the capacity of community health workers to manage the COVID-19 pandemic

Monica Brinzac

M Brinzac¹, M Ungureanu¹, C Țințaș¹

¹Department of Public Health, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca, Romania

Contact: monica.brinzac@publichealth.ro

In Romania, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the community healthworkers faced high risks of infection in their efforts to protect communities, due to exposure to psychological distress, fatigue and stigma, especially as they are the grass-root healthcare delivery workers. No proper training had been delivered to community health workers. We describe an intervention aimed at increasing Romanian community health workers skills and competencies. The objective of the training was to increase the capacity of community health workers and health mediators to adequately manage the COVID-19 pandemic in their communities, through the delivery of online training sessions focused on managing their communities and themselves. The courses addressed up-to-date information on SARS-CoV-2 virus, transmission, symptoms and methods of prevention and treatment of COVID-19, to community case management and addressing cross-cutting issues such as: disability, immunization, violence against children. A total of 144 sessions were delivered, totaling 288 hours, divided between eight trainers. During these 288 hours, 1658 community health workers and health mediators were trained, accounting for 75% of the community health workers and health mediators in Romania. The overall feedback was extremely positive, as the training provided the participants very useful information. Nonetheless, several learning points have been made regarding the provision of more hands-on examples and cases, an increase in the length of the course and in the number of courses, the delivery of the course - on site courses were demanded. The training contributed to increasing the capacity of community health workers and health mediators to adequately manage the COVID-19 pandemic. The training offered the basic knowledge and skills for community healthworkers and it offered a basis for offering large scale, online training for the Romanian health workforce, which could be used as a case study for other European settings.

Key messages:

- COVID-19 doesn't affect everyone equally! We ought to equip our healthworkforce in the pandemic fight.
- Grass-root intervention for a better health - training the community health workers.