

# A Qualitative Study of Primary Health Care Case-management Nurses during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed unprecedented demands on healthcare systems worldwide, requiring healthcare professionals to adapt rapidly to new challenges. Primary health care (PHC) case-management nurses play a crucial role in coordinating care for patients, particularly those with complex health needs. This qualitative study explores the experiences of PHC case-management nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on their roles, challenges, and coping strategies. PHC case-management nurses are responsible for coordinating care for patients with complex health needs, including those with chronic illnesses, disabilities, or multiple comorbidities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these nurses have faced unique challenges, such as managing the care of vulnerable populations, navigating rapidly changing guidelines and protocols, and addressing the increased mental health needs of patients and their families. This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the experiences of PHC case-management nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with nurses working in PHC settings, focusing on their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies during the pandemic [1,2].

## Description

Participants are selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in terms of age, years of experience, and geographic location. Nurses from different PHC settings, such as clinics, community health centers, and home health agencies, are included to capture a range of experiences. Semi-structured interviews are conducted either in person or virtually, depending on the participants' preferences. The interviews are audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Participants are asked about their experiences during the pandemic, including how their roles and responsibilities have changed, the challenges they have faced, and the strategies they have used to cope [3]. Thematic analysis is used to analyze the interview data. The transcripts are coded independently by two researchers, and themes are identified through an iterative process of coding and discussion. The themes are then organized into overarching categories to provide a comprehensive understanding of the nurses' experiences. During the pandemic, PHC case-management nurses have experienced significant changes in their roles and responsibilities. They have taken on additional tasks, such as COVID-19 screening and testing, contact tracing, and coordinating care for patients with COVID-19. This study has several limitations, including its small sample size and reliance on self-reported data. Future research could explore the experiences of PHC case-management nurses in other settings or countries to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their role during the COVID-19 pandemic [4-6].

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## Conclusion

PHC case-management nurses play a critical role in coordinating care for patients with complex health needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite facing significant challenges, these nurses have demonstrated resilience and adaptability in their response to the crisis. By understanding their experiences, healthcare organizations can better support PHC case-management nurses and enhance their ability to provide high-quality care during future pandemics or public health emergencies. Nurses report feeling overwhelmed by the increased workload, which has been exacerbated by staff shortages and the need for overtime. Nurses describe feeling stressed, anxious, and emotionally drained due to the challenges of caring for patients during a pandemic. Nurses express concerns about their own safety and the risk of contracting COVID-19 while caring for patients. Communication with patients, families, and other healthcare providers has been challenging due to the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and restrictions on in-person interactions. Despite the challenges they face, PHC case-management nurses have developed various coping strategies to manage stress and maintain their well-being. Nurses seek support from their colleagues, supervisors, and mental health professionals to cope with the emotional toll of the pandemic. Nurses prioritize self-care activities, such as exercise, meditation, and spending time outdoors, to maintain their physical and mental health. Nurses embrace change and adapt to new ways of working, such as using telehealth and virtual communication tools. Nurses engage in professional development activities to stay informed about the latest guidelines and best practices for managing COVID-19.

## Acknowledgement

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## Conflict of Interest

None.

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