

## Impact of COVID-19 Economic Issues on Behavioral Health of American Males

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### **About This Monograph**

Men's Health Network (MHN) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide health awareness advocacy to men, boys, and their families where they live, work, play, and pray. Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) provides grants and other funding to support programs that help people make informed health care by producing and promoting high-integrity, evidence-based research guided by patients, caregivers, and the broader health care community.

### **Program**

This report is based on an expert panel convened by MHN on January 6, 2021, and partially funded by PCORI. Participants in this e-conference came from the public and private sectors including economists, policymakers, men's health activists, researchers and professionals who work with boys and men.

### **Background**

Much of this discussion builds on the understanding of the unique behavioral health issues faced by males covered in depth by MHN in the core publication, "Behavioral Health Aspects of Depression and Anxiety in the American Male: Identifying Areas of Patient-Centered Outcome-Oriented Needs, Practices, and Future Research,"<sup>1</sup>

### **Panel Discussion Summary**

The conference was structured to discuss a broad range of issues surrounding the economic impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has on the behavioral and psychosocial health of boys and men as well as the associated economic burdens placed on men and their families.

The panel addressed 10 broad themes that were woven into the overall dialogue and formed the basis for developing consensus-driven recommendations. These are:

1. A historical review and analysis of past pandemics and large-scale epidemics and their overall impact on economics of their era. This includes reviews by economic historians as they attempted to create models of economic trends that might be used to forecast the economic impact of similar events. This review indicates there are few overarching patterns can be determined.
2. How COVID-19 impacts are unique and compared to historical medically related economic downturns. Also how these differ from economic depressions caused by fundamental economic instabilities. While COVID-19 has had a damaging impact on global economies, its impacts occurred during times of relative fundamental economic strength and stability in many countries, including the United States. Many economists believe that this will make the economic recovery from COVID-19 easier in many sectors, and how macro-economic indices should return to quickly. Discussions of structural changes and innovations in the way businesses (including health care business) resume due to this pandemic.
3. Review of the relationship between economic downturns and the stress, particularly the impact of prolonged periods of being in "crisis mode". The unique ways that these pressures have impacted boys and men in different demographics was carefully reviewed and considered. The panel also provided perspectives on the types of changes that need to be made to better manage future medical emergencies.
4. COVID-19 has impacted medical care in many ways. Systemic changes range from broader utilization of technology to the demise of many smaller independent health care practices and business. The panel looked at opportunities to evaluate how new models of care may be carried through, reimbursed, and evaluated.
5. Fundamental deficiencies in health care delivery were reviewed. These include male health disparities, particularly in the area of mental health, the impact of systemic racism, lack of male gender and ethnic diversity in the health care workforce across professions, and the lack of training of professionals in comprehensive male health care.
6. The unique impact of COVID-19 on boys and men both physically and emotionally because of difficulties with males engaging in health care, particularly mental health. There was also a discussion of some of the factors that have led to drastic under-reporting and under-diagnosis of significant mental health issues in males and how these align to economic issues.
7. Many of the factors involved in vaccine hesitancy, including the role of media and ingrained distrust by many communities, in particular minority communities, were discussed.
8. The long-term medical, social, and psychological impacts of COVID-19 and their economic consequences, including lapse in chronic care and education were discussed.
9. Assess the unique needs, particularly in primary care, to address Post-COVID Traumatic Stress Disorder, which may affect millions, including children, and COVID-Long-Hauler Syndrome.

<sup>1</sup> [www.menshealthnetwork.org/library/depression-anxiety-males-report-summary.pdf](http://www.menshealthnetwork.org/library/depression-anxiety-males-report-summary.pdf)

10. Discussion of approaches that may be helpful in providing more rapid and flexible economic safety nets for individuals, families, and businesses when faced with another medically induced economic downturn.

### **Recommendations To Move Forward And Areas Of Research**

The expert panel provided the following recommendations and research areas for next steps:

1. Approaches to rapidly provide better and more direct financial assistance to individuals and small business without additional legislation.
2. Research on how health care providers and services were impacted; develop approaches based on this research to facilitate continuation-of-care, assess the outcome of various care options and, determine new medical business economic support options.
3. Research various population economic sectors to better understand how physical and emotional stress due to a pandemic-like scenario impact the health and economics.
4. Develop and conduct population-based studies to identify key determinates of resilience and distress as they apply to pandemic recovery.
5. Research strategies to help pandemic-affected children manage adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) related to pandemics like scenarios.
6. Conduct short- and long-term comparative effectiveness research on new technologies such as telemedicine and telepsychiatry.
7. Address the lack of parity between reimbursement for mental health and physical health diagnosis and clinical management, particularly in primary care.
8. Programs that have been locally successful in addressing poor in determinants of health in at-risk populations should be supported for further development and expansion.
9. Conduct broad-based research about factors that contribute to vaccine-hesitancy. These should include comparative research to identify communication, educational, and other important aspects of restoring

trust in health care and science. Approaches must include stratification by sex, gender, population, socioeconomic and racial demographics.

10. Assess and optimize various communication approaches between key stake holders in the information-cascade about pandemic management from laboratory to the general public to help manage economic impacts.
11. Develop effective approaches to community-based outreach to boys and men about health and wellness. Develop and evaluate field training programs for peer-level Community Men's Health Educators outcomes to reach males with critical health and financial messages.
12. Encourage and support development of new and "hybrid" approaches to care management, including multiple platforms such as telehealth, telepsychiatry, remote patient data monitoring and hands-on diagnostics.
13. Assess the impact of these newer healthcare delivery technologies and approaches in general and specifically with a focus on their impact on rural and underserved communities or patients with limited access to care.
14. Conduct workforce assessments for all health professionals to examine professional workforce needs in the context of the changing demographics of the country and to identify gaps and opportunities.
15. Health care professional program recruiting approaches, financial-assistance models, and career opportunity engagement at the secondary and early college levels should be examined and optimized.
16. A review of training in the discipline of comprehensive male health in professional programs should be undertaken to identify opportunities to better train providers in delivering male-gender-specific care. In order to effect such change professional credentialing organizations, need to incorporate male health management more broadly in certification competencies.

**[FULL TEXT OF THIS REPORT CAN BE ACCESSED ELECTRONICALLY AT  
www.menshealthnetwork.org/library/behavioral-health-boys-men-covid-19-economic.pdf](http://www.menshealthnetwork.org/library/behavioral-health-boys-men-covid-19-economic.pdf)**

### **About Men's Health Network (MHN)**

MHN is an international non-profit organization whose mission is to reach men, boys, and their families where they live, work, play, and pray with health awareness messages and tools, screening programs, educational materials, advocacy opportunities, and patient navigation. MHN is the sponsor of [Men's Health Month](#) (June) and [Wear Blue Day](#). MHN maintains the [TesticularCancerAwarenessMonth.com](#) and [ProstateCancerAwarenessMonth.com](#) websites. For information on MHN's programs and activities, visit them at [menshealthnetwork.org](http://menshealthnetwork.org), on Twitter ([@MensHlthNetwork](#)), and on Facebook ([facebook.com/menshealthnetwork](https://facebook.com/menshealthnetwork)), or call 212-543-6461.

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