

# Way forward managing mental health in COVID-19 endemic phase

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Summary:** COVID-19 pandemic had contributed to widespread emotional distress and increased the number of mental disorders reported in 2020 and 2021. The pandemic had triggered a range of emotional reactions (fear, sadness, anger, disgust, frustration, confusion, boredom), and unhealthy behaviors (psychomotor agitation with abusive behaviour, excessive substance use), and noncompliance with public health directives (such as home confinement and vaccination) in the general population. The mental disorders include Acute Stress Disorder which complicates into Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, Normal Grief which later develop Pathological Grief, Panic Disorder and Generalized Anxiety Disorder. COVID-19 endemic refers to the inability to eradicate the presence of coronavirus in the community. With more than 95% adult population fully vaccinated with booster dose, adolescents and children vaccination drive is well in place, together with decreasing number of serious respiratory symptoms and death, Malaysia declared the endemic phase in October 2021. In the context of COVID-19 endemic phase, psychosocial assessment, monitoring and deliver support is still relevant. Referral for mental health evaluation and care with supportive interventions to promote wellness will ensure the prevention of mental ill-health complications of COVID-19 infection. The mental health surveillance will allow for an adequate and appropriate response to the mental health issues. Individuals with mental health issues are continuously manage with pharmacotherapy, psychotherapies, cognitive therapy, behavioural therapy, psychosocial rehabilitation, psychoeducation and counseling. The awareness and health hygiene program is ongoing for the general population.