

Looking Through the Covid-19 Lens: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Hospital-Based Healthcare

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INTRODUCTION and OBJECTIVE

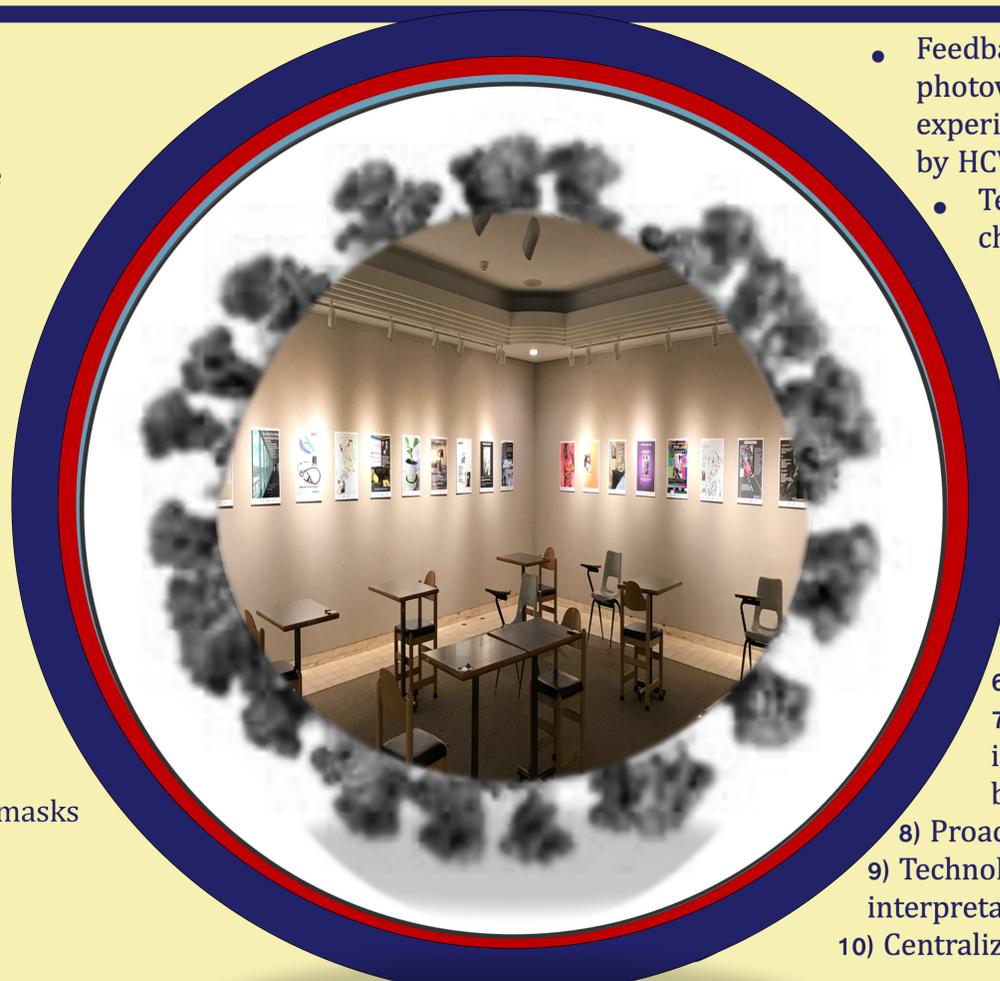
The spread of the COVID-19 virus has caused an unforeseen strain on the healthcare system and in particular healthcare workers (HCW). In this study, one year after the COVID-19 pandemic began; we used photovoice, a visual photographic approach, to understand HCW needs, concerns, and resilience and to determine improvement strategies aligned to the HCW described challenges.

METHODS

- Qualitative study design
- HCW recruited from a single Western Canadian hospital, voluntarily submitting a photographic image and narrative that depicts their experiences
- Photovoice submissions were artistically enhanced by an artist and displayed at the hospital-based art gallery for public display
- Feedback from gallery viewers gathered using a survey
- Thematic analysis used to identify themes from the Photovoice narratives and from gallery viewers' survey comments

RESULTS

- Twenty-five submissions were received
- 1,281 individuals viewed the art exhibit in one month
- Six themes were generated:
 - (1) hopeful and resilient
 - (2) pandemic fatigue-negative mental and physical states
 - (3) personal protective equipment (PPE) is our armor but masks who we are
 - (4) human connection
 - (5) responsibility, preparation and obligation
 - (6) technology surge



- Feedback from the art exhibit survey identified that the use of photovoice was a creative method that personalized the HCW experience, and validated viewers' perceptions of the difficulties faced by HCW
- Ten improvement strategies were identified aligned to the described challenges

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Vaccination accessibility for both HCW and patients
- 2) Mental health supports offered via digital platforms and human resources
- 3) Hospital HCW support group
- 4) Hospital leaders provided formal empathy training
- 5) Staff safety as top priority-i.e. PPE accessible and PPE coaches on units to assist
- 6) Wearable buttons to show HCW faces
- 7) Collaborate with existing programs to reintroduce safe staff interaction/activities-i.e. laughing yoga, music therapy, and hospital-based artistic programs
- 8) Proactively addressing staff scheduling and coverage
- 9) Technology accessible and training provided-i.e. digital medical interpretation, virtual appointments, etc.
- 10) Centralize and reduce Covid communications, prevent info overload

CONCLUSION

Photovoice has great potential in the professional clinical setting to provide unique insights that narrative language alone cannot capture. Future studies exploring the longitudinal impact of Covid-19, reviewing photographs at different time points may be valuable. Further, using this method as a creative outlet intervention and evaluating the benefit of the artistic experience may offer additional insights to support both HCW and patients.

The authors thank all the University of Alberta Hospital staff for their continued service during this health crisis. To the study participants we thank you for courageously sharing your lived experience through both image and words, sharing the healthcare personnel perspective during the Covid-19 pandemic. To the University of Alberta McMullen Art gallery and Artist on the Ward staff we thank you for hosting, displaying and supporting this artistic expression-photovoice.

