



Paramedic Chiefs
of Canada

Chefs Paramédics
du Canada

Paramedic Services Week

May 24-30, 2020

Pandemic: Paramedics on the Front Line

HEALTH and RESILIENCY

Paramedics, like many health professionals have a difficult job under normal circumstances, more so currently on the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Good health is about more than just the absence of sickness. Focusing on wellbeing and building resiliency is important in establishing a holistic approach to health, addressing both physical and psychological states.

The World Health Organization defines wellbeing as “*the state in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community*”. Wellbeing involves having positive self-image and esteem.

Resilience, which is directly related to wellbeing, is about having the ability to cope with and adapt to new situations. Having a sense of resilience and positive wellbeing enables a person to approach other people and situations with confidence and optimism, which is especially important for health professionals given the enormous changes that are currently happening.

Health professionals, both clinical and non-clinical, operate in high stress environments, which can be under-resourced and under strain. This environment negatively impacts their mental health and wellbeing, with a substantial body of literature indicating high levels of stress and burnout, indicators of low wellbeing, as well as more serious symptoms pointing to mental illness in this profession. The adverse consequences of stress, burnout, overall low wellbeing and mental health on individuals are well known and include diminished physical and psychosocial functioning. Additionally, these outcomes can result in higher rates of absenteeism and when on the job, can lead to reduced professional functioning and presentism. This in turn can lead to lowered quality of care for patients that receive treatment by health professionals with low wellbeing and mental health issues. For instance, major medical errors, a leading cause of preventable death, increase with higher rates of burnout and depressive symptoms.