

**VIRTUAL
MEDICAL
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**MEDICAL RESEARCH
DURING PANDEMIC:
ADAPTING & INNOVATING
IN ADVERSITY**

14TH DECEMBER 2021



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ABSTRACT BOOK



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SEVERE STRESS MIMIC HEART DISEASE DURING COVID19 PANDEMIC

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Mental health illness during the COVID-19 pandemic poses a dilemma, particularly the distinction between heart disease and severe stress. Without early intervention, it can be escalating into anxiety disorder or depression with suicidal risk. A 44-year-old man sought a cardiologist consultation due to the "heart disease" symptoms. He has huge commitments and responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic as a lab technician in charge adding to his hypertension and dyslipidaemia comorbidities. Despite non-significant investigations related to heart disease, he returned with the same intense unresolved symptoms. His Depression-Anxiety-Stress-Score (DASS) assessment revealed severe stress. Stress management counselling includes detecting the underlying stress impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, behavioural changes, and stress coping skills was done in 4 sessions. The 1st one-hour session was to instill positive thinking and behavioural changes of the underlying severe stress and to counsel the stress coping skills. Stress coping skills include relaxation techniques (Deep Breathing Technique and Progressive Relaxation Methods) and spiritual empowerment (Islamic Integrated Meditation). The next three counselling sessions of thirty minutes duration to enhance the positive thinking and stress coping skills were done at two-week intervals. A twelve-week follow-up reassessment of stress level has shown a significant improvement of DASS score with no similar symptoms' complaint. This case highlights the clinical complexity and diagnostic challenges in detecting mental health illness during pandemics. A systematic diagnostic approach of biological and psychosocial underlying problem lists demonstrated that without a high index of suspicion, mental health illness may be overlooked.

