

## **THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON TRAUMATIC STRESS (TS) OR POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) PATIENT RISK, PREVENTION, AND TREATMENT IN RAJSHAHI CITY OF BANGLADESH**

**Background and Objectives:** This exploratory study was to investigate barriers to traumatic stress patients accessing, utilizing, and remaining in the diagnosis, management, and treatment, and to document how the country handled the requirement of traumatic stress and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) patients during COVID-19.

**Methods:** The study was conducted from January – March 2022 in the Rajshahi City of Bangladesh. The study involved: (1) a review of official orders/statements issued by the Government, (2) a traumatic stress patient (n=15) and their kin survey (n=15), (3) service providers interviews (n=10), (4) key informant interviews (n=10), and (5) a one-day negotiation workshop with 20 participants representing both traumatic stress patients and their kins, and service provider.

**Results:** The results seem to confirm that there were no facilities for testing and treatment for current and past traumatic stress/ mental health patients. The TS patients and their kin mentioned that in the clinics/hospitals, the service providers' behavior and attitude toward TS/mental health patients were highly intolerant, hostile, and inhuman. Over 90 percent of the total sample reported having no counseling or treatment for TS during COVID-19 peaks. When the health service facilities opened for non-communicable diseases, 95 percent of TS were diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

**Conclusions:** As PTSD and other psychiatric disorders exert a substantial burden on individuals and society early detection and intervention are important during and following major outbreaks like the COVID-19 pandemic. Early treatment was essential to limit the negative impact of trauma because PTSD developed over time due to overprocessed trauma where early treatment could help prevent the more severe and harmful effects. As Bangladesh navigates post-pandemic life, healthcare providers must reflect on the lessons learned. And more research is needed to investigate TS/PTSD and related concerns following the pandemic.