

## WHAT IS iCOVER-Med?

**iCOVER-Med is a rapid, peer-based response to help manage acute stress in team members and return the team back to a high level of functioning.**

Health care workers providing treatment to patients during COVID-19 are serving under high-stress/high-stakes conditions. In this unprecedented context, health care workers on the front lines may encounter team members who are overwhelmed by stress.

When an individual becomes completely overwhelmed by stress, they may experience an Acute Stress Reaction. An Acute Stress Reaction can prevent a member of a medical team from functioning, which can impede the delivery of patient care and exacerbate team stress.

While an Acute Stress Reaction can resolve itself over time, teams that rely on one another to be effective in the moment need a way to immediately manage acute stress in others.

## RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF ACUTE STRESS REACTION

**Know the following possible signs of an Acute Stress Reaction:**

- *Appearing “frozen” and detached from what is happening*
- *Showing extreme emotion (panic, fear, anger)*
- *Behaving erratically, such as dropping equipment or acting without regard to danger*

***The common denominator is that the person stops functioning for a period of time***

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Help your teammate return to functioning by using iCOVER-Med, a six-step protocol that can be completed in under 60 seconds. iCOVER-Med, based on a protocol developed by the Israel Defense Forces and adapted by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, has excellent user acceptability, is easy to learn, and is linked to better outcomes for military units.

- I**dentify the team member who is having an Acute Stress Reaction
- C**onnect to bring them to the present moment (eye contact, touch, hearing)
- O**ffer commitment to reduce sense of isolation
- V**erify facts with simple questions to get the thinking brain back in gear
- E**stablish order of events to reorient the individual
- R**equest action to re-engage in purposeful action

# iCOVER-Med IN ACTION

STEPS	PURPOSE	ACTION	EXAMPLE
<b>Identify</b>	See if team member needs help	Make sure there's not a physical reason for their presentation.	Team member is having trouble functioning—they may appear frozen, non-responsive, dissociated, or agitated.
<b>Connect</b>	Return to present moment	Make eye contact, talk, touch arm.	"Look at me. Can you hear me? I'm going to squeeze your arm, you squeeze mine back."
<b>Offer commitment</b>	Reduce sense of isolation	Remind them they are not on their own.	"I'm right here with you, I'm not going anywhere. You are not alone."
<b>Verify facts</b>	Get thinking brain back in gear	Ask 2-3 simple, fact-based questions.	"What hospital are we in?" "Who is the attending for this patient?" "What illness are we treating here?"
<b>Establish order of events</b>	Reorient the individual	Using simple statements, explain what happened, what is happening, and what will happen.	"We came on shift. We are putting on our PPE. We have to go take care of our patients."
<b>Request action</b>	Re-engage in purposeful action	Make a simple request to get them engaging in action.	"I need you to secure your face shield. Let's go!"

## FAQs

**What's going on when someone has an Acute Stress Reaction?** Under extreme stress, the amygdala hijacks the brain and prevents the pre-frontal cortex—the thinking part of the brain—from functioning.

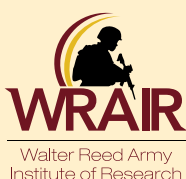
**What tone of voice should I use when going through the iCOVER-Med steps?** Be authoritative and clear. Don't be overly emotional and don't yell at them—the emotion part of their brain (the amygdala) is already overloaded.

**What if I do the steps out of order or miss a step?** Keep going and if it doesn't work, re-start the steps.

**What if the person doesn't respond to me?** Move them out of the way for safety and, depending on the situation, ask for additional help for the patient and the team member.

**How often am I likely to see someone go through acute stress?** About 40% of Soldiers report seeing a team member in combat experience an Acute Stress Reaction. Medical care isn't combat, but acute stress may be experienced under extreme conditions.

**How is this relevant to COVID-19?** Maximizing and preserving healthcare provider effectiveness is a crucial part of the fight against COVID-19. This adapted version is designed to support medical teams continue their dedicated response on the front lines of the pandemic.



Selected references: Adler, A. B. et al. (2019). Rapid response to acute stress reaction: Pilot test of iCOVER training for military units. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*. Advance online publication. | Svetlitzky, V. et al. (2019). YaHaLOM: A rapid intervention for Acute Stress Reactions in high-risk occupations. *Military Behavioral Health*, 1-11. | Svetlitzky, V. et al. (2019). Rapid peer-based intervention for acute stress: Evaluation of YaHaLOM training in the military. *Psychological Services*. Advance online publication.

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