1. Objective

It is not clear what kind of support is needed for college students who are convinced to have had intense contact with COVID-19 patients. In this study, we report on the psychological support they need.

2. Definition of “close contact with COVID-19 patients” in Japan

A person who has been considered to have had potential for 2 days prior to the 3rd day of illness due to a certain period of time is defined as a close contact person. This definition is based on the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare of Japan’s guidelines for infection control measures. During this period, a person may be assessed as infected if any of the following conditions are met: 1) contact with a person with the same disease within 1 m for more than 15 minutes; 2) contact with a person not wearing a mask; 3) symptomless patient; 4) contact with a person with an unspecified number of people; 5) infection of a close contact person. The time of contact is defined as the period of exposure to the infected person.

3. Requires 2 weeks of home stay from the last day of close contact

How to spend the period of health observation (stay at home)

- Please refrain from taking unnecessary trips out of the house. Please consider using mail orders or home delivery services. If you have no choice but to go out, please take infection control measures such as wearing a mask and practicing hand hygiene, and avoid contact with people.
- Please refrain from commuting to work or school. Telecommuting and remote teaching are acceptable.
- Do not use public transportation (trains, buses, taxis, airplanes, etc. used by an unspecified number of people).
- If you are not able to avoid contact with other people, take the following measures: fever, cough, sore throat, tiredness, and lack of appetite are symptoms, please consult us in advance and visit a pre-arranged doctor for medical treatment or consultation.

4. Methods

Students who were infected with COVID-19 (group A) and those who were classified as heavy contacts (group B) enrolled at Kwansei Gakuin University were asked to complete an online, unstructured questionnaire. The data were compiled from the responses received by September 25, 2021 (approximately by the time of the Delta outbreak). Data were collected from responses received by September 25, 2021 (approximately by the time of the Delta outbreak).

This survey was approved (KH-IRB-20-04) by the Kwansei Gakuin University Ethics Committee for Human Subjects in Medicine.

5. Results

The number of infected persons was 237, and the number of persons in close contact was 372. The number of valid responses and response rate were 50 cases in group A (4.1%) and 55 cases in group B (6.4%). The following graphs show the results.

6. Infection route (Multiple choices allowed)

7. Who supported you during your home isolation due to close contact? (Multiple choices allowed)

8. What were you worried about when you were infected or had a close contact? (Multiple choices allowed)

9. What were your concerns about your relationships with others when you were infected or a close contact? (Multiple choices allowed)

10. What were you concerned in your daily life when you were infected or a close contact? (Multiple choices allowed)

11. What is the degree of depression at the time of infection or close contact and how did you respond to it? (Multiple choices allowed)

12. How long do you think you should have continued home support after discharge from the hospital or after the end of your voluntary home isolation? (Multiple choices allowed)

Conclusion

We found that students who have had close contact with covid-19 patients need the same psychological support as students infected with covid-19.