



# A Study on the Current Situation of Health Anxiety Among Middle-Aged and Elderly People After Full Liberalization of Epidemic Prevention and Control and Intervention

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**Abstract.** After the release of the “New Ten Articles”, the epidemic prevention and control policies in many places are being optimized and gradually liberalized. Everyone has become the first person in charge of his or her own health, and with it comes various anxieties and anxieties about future health problems. In this paper, we investigate the characteristics and manifestations of health anxiety among the middle-aged and elderly, and explore the factors affecting health anxiety among the middle-aged and elderly, with the aim of better understanding and intervening in the health anxiety of the middle-aged and elderly, and improving the physical and mental health of the middle-aged and elderly.

**Keywords:** epidemic liberalization · middle-aged and older adults · health anxiety

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

With the weakening of the pathogenicity of the New Coronavirus and the accumulation of experience in prevention and control as well as people’s awareness of epidemic prevention, the New Coronavirus outbreak in China has been largely controlled and prevention and control efforts have entered a regular phase. At the same time, some mental health problems during the epidemic have begun to emerge. In China, with a series of factors such as population ageing, socio-economic development and changes in residents’ lifestyles, older people, especially those aged 70 and above, are also facing varying degrees of health anxiety. This has led to a number of mental health problems in some middle-aged and older people, especially in the elderly population, such as worries about illness, death and the consequences of illness. Therefore, interventions targeting health anxiety in middle-aged and older people are important to improve the physical and mental health of middle-aged and older people.

## 1.2 Significance

Since the spread of the new crown epidemic, the severe outbreak has had a significant impact on people's lives and psychology. Among them, the middle-aged and elderly are absolutely vulnerable compared to the rest of the population. Especially during the epidemic, they have to face greater challenges than younger people. Therefore, in order to help middle-aged and elderly people to eliminate fear and anxiety, relieve psychological stress, reduce the risk of New Coronavirus infection and maintain their physical and mental health, the study has taken middle-aged and elderly people as the target and beneficiary population of the intervention, and conducted a tracer study and survey to map the health status of middle-aged and elderly people.

## 2 Definition of Relevant Concepts

### 2.1 Full Liberalisation of the Epidemic

On December 7, 2022, the State Council issued a circular to further optimize the implementation of measures for the prevention and control of the New Coronary Pneumonia Epidemic, which is commonly known as the New Ten Articles.

In this new ten-article circular, the State Council has completely abolished the health code that has followed us for three years, the green code, and no longer makes it mandatory to provide a negative nucleic acid certificate in public places.

And after the release of the new ten regulations various cities have followed suit and fully liberalised their epidemic prevention and control, the once frequent experience of being fully sealed off after a positive Nucleic Acid for all and a positive cell has become history.

### 2.2 Health Anxiety

Health anxiety is an excessive concern about one's health, which can lead to a range of anxieties. Health anxiety is a continuous spectrum of symptoms, with a mild preoccupation with somatic sensations at one end of the spectrum, and persistently strong health-related fears and preoccupations at the other. Depending on the severity of the symptoms, health anxiety can be classified as mild, moderate, severe and very severe, with the very severe condition being known as hypochondriasis [1].

## 3 Current Status and Causes of Health Anxiety Among Middle-Aged and Elderly People After Full Liberalization of Epidemic Prevention and Control

### 3.1 The Current State of Health Anxiety

#### Common Concerns of Middle-Aged and Older People About Their Health

With the increasing ageing of our population, the physical condition of the middle-aged and elderly population has also changed considerably.

On the one hand, middle-aged and elderly people's physical functions are gradually declining; on the other hand, they are also more prone to various diseases due to factors such as changes in people's lifestyle and habits. This is why middle-aged and older people face more health anxiety problems than younger people.

In the aftermath of an epidemic, middle-aged and elderly people are prone to anxiety due to their own age and health status. At the same time, the lower psychological profile, lack of understanding of health issues and lack of appropriate knowledge among the middle-aged and elderly also lead to a higher level of concern about health issues.

### **Health Anxiety Exists in Varying Degrees**

During the epidemic, middle-aged and older people are more concerned about health issues than younger people. For example, they are more concerned than younger people about the need to go out and whether they have enough personal protective equipment, and they are more concerned about their own health than younger people are about illness. In addition, the middle-aged and older people are more concerned about their own health than younger people are about the disease. Therefore, after the epidemic is released, the middle-aged and older people are faced with more anxieties about how to isolate themselves from their children and how to protect themselves.

## **3.2 Causes of Health Anxiety**

### **Underlying Disease**

As the middle-aged and elderly people themselves have a variety of underlying illnesses, they are prone to various complications as well as other symptoms during the epidemic. For example, elderly people who are bedridden for a long time may develop bedsores and pneumonia; those with underlying illnesses such as hypertension and diabetes are prone to other complications; and those with cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases may die due to various complications. The reduced physical functions and immunity of middle-aged and elderly people can easily trigger the occurrence of health anxiety symptoms in the event of abnormal conditions [2].

### **Limited Awareness Leads to Excessive Fear**

While young people can learn about the epidemic through the internet, middle-aged and elderly people, due to their physical condition and lack of access to the internet and smartphones, rely heavily on their "hearsay" circle of friends to maintain interactions and receive information about the epidemic, and lack the ability to actively seek authoritative information and dispel rumours. This limited access to information leads to limited awareness of the epidemic, resulting in excessive fear and anxiety among the elderly [3]. This leads to excessive fear and anxiety.

### **Social Restrictions Lead to Feelings of Isolation**

While the socialization of middle-aged and elderly people in their daily lives is mainly concentrated in the community and parks, the reduction of going out at home during the epidemic greatly limits the socialization of middle-aged and elderly people and widens

their distance from society. This is especially true for those elderly people who live alone or are widowed and isolated at home, which exacerbates their marginalisation.

Older people who live at home and do not go out are more likely to suffer from depression, which seriously affects their physical and mental health and quality of life, as well as creating a sense of alienation from society and their own loneliness.

## **4 Interventions and Recommendations**

### **4.1 Look at the Epidemic Rationally and Objectively to Reduce Fear**

For the middle-aged and elderly people's lack of awareness of the epidemic, family members should help them to understand the correct information about the epidemic from official sources. They should be able to face the epidemic in a rational and positive manner and see the effective prevention and control work carried out by the government.

### **4.2 Maintaining Communication and Contact with Middle-Aged and Elderly People**

Family members are the greatest support for older people in their psychological adjustment. During the epidemic, the social life of the elderly is reduced, so it is important for family members to spend more time with them, to maintain communication and contact with them, and to resolve any psychological problems they may have.

At the same time, family members can also help middle-aged and older people learn how to use smartphones and the Internet, so that they can connect with friends through the Internet, increase online social interaction and reduce loneliness at home. During the epidemic, middle-aged and elderly people are prone to adverse emotions and psychological problems such as tension, anxiety and depression, and family members should provide scientific guidance and reasonable counselling to them [4].

### **4.3 Home Recreational Exercise and Regular Exercise**

During home time, family members can work out at home with middle-aged and older adults, choosing home exercises that are suitable for middle-aged and older adults. Middle-aged and older people can choose aerobic exercises that are less intense and suitable for the characteristics of middle-aged and older people, which can effectively reduce anxiety levels. This can also improve the immune system of middle-aged and elderly people, playing exercises such as Tai Chi and yoga, which are also a good way to reduce stress [5]. In addition, it is important to pay attention to the amount of exercise to avoid excessive fatigue or injury.

### **4.4 Strengthening Social Support Systems for Middle-Aged and Elderly Groups**

More social support can bring a sense of security to the elderly and alleviate anxiety and depression. With the full liberalisation of the epidemic, the strengthening of social support systems can rely on the advantages of community psychological services "Internet

+ “, allowing older people to receive care from their children as well as having their own circle of friends to provide support and enhance communication through online interactive platforms [6].

Through a combination of government-led and community-based approaches, senior activity venues and services with local characteristics are being created.

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