



Editorial

Mental Health in Times of Pandemic

La Salud Mental en Tiempos de la Pandemia



Since the end of December, with the onset of the pandemic in the small municipality of Wuhan in China, until now, with more than 170 countries affected, scant consideration has been given to the mental health of the world's more than seven billion inhabitants. The priority has been to attempt to prevent the death of infected people through intensive care units and scientific activity on a massive scale, in the quest for an effective treatment or the discovery of a vaccine.

As we have been dealing with a highly contagious and highly lethal virus, quarantine has, up to now, been the epidemiological model chosen to slow down the speed of contagion, in order to enable the preparation of highly complex health services and, with subsequent partial and/or total closure strategies, arrive at a stage when a good percentage of the population has achieved immunity. Here we are talking about a process that will take many months. However, the quarantine and the uncertainty surrounding the whole situation is having a significant effect on our mental health. Added to the fact that our having to acquire new ways of living and behaving is directly related to the risk of transmission, it is time we began to focus on the mental processes.

Little time and attention has been paid to the individual and collective mental condition. Care and support programmes set up to help individuals with their problems in this area are fragmented and ineffective. Anxiety and depressive disorders, added to the adaptive processes needed to deal with a new way of life, require support. We need to aim for an

organised approach which is fully accessible and open to all. If we also add the high percentage of people who already suffered from a mental disorder and who may have seen their condition worsen, this component becomes even more of a priority for health services, including the availability of pharmacological treatments.

Looking back, in different epidemic situations, the impact on the population's mental health had previously been considered. Although limited, we did find evidence on both models and therapeutic alternatives to face the challenge of dealing with the individual and collective mental condition.

Without this strategy, it will be very difficult to succeed in reducing deaths at a regional level. Human behaviour, anxiety and depression play an important role in this approach.

Other considerations will need analysis once this pandemic is over.

Life goes on. The Colombian psychiatric community must persevere. The Association keeps working in this regard, and obviously, the journal itself, and the fact that we are able to keep publishing is proof of that.

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