

## Editorial

# Mental health and COVID in Latin America<sup>☆</sup>

## Salud mental y Covid en Latinoamérica



When the pandemic first took off around the world 16 months ago, none of us thought that it would reach the levels of impact that we are seeing today, with losses of human lives already counted in millions and evidence of a chaotic social and economic reality for each of our countries. Undoubtedly, the dimension that has become most evident and that can be termed a human drama is that of the existing inequality in social and economic issues. The poor have suffered the consequences of an international political and economic struggle that makes Latin America a region subject to these dynamics, living through a true horror film. Thus, poverty and the social determinants of health evident in our spheres have worsened and contributed to the advance of the pandemic. Moreover, the health systems in our region are precarious in their development and lack sufficient structure to respond.

Due to the lack of true health systems, Latin American countries have not strengthened primary health care which, as we know, plays a fundamental role in the elimination of infections. There must also be coordination at highly complex levels and with intensive care units so that they may be sufficiently able to contain to some degree the number of deaths as a result of infection, and this has not happened.

Mental health is an extremely important area for individual and collective well-being, and is the most necessary dimension to face the human suffering to which the infection has led us with adaptive capacity and resilience. But our countries lacked a mental health care system that would help

individuals and groups have this capacity which is needed to overcome such a catastrophe. Another element is the consequences of the pandemic, which are even more dire. They have resulted in a true mental pandemic, but without the logistical response capabilities in place to minimally help improve the quality of life of the groups we are called on to support.

The *Revista Colombiana de Psiquiatría* (*Colombian Journal of Psychiatry*) felt compelled to compile the articles and works that have been sent in from different Latin American countries. This issue will provide you with data with which to work in this global situation. We hope so.

With nostalgia, but with the satisfaction of having accomplished the task, I write the last editorial. As editor, I have worked with love and passion in this role for nine years. I hope I have contributed to the growth of the journal and, of course, to our valuable work for the mental health of Colombia and Latin America. Thank you.

Carlos A. Palacio<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Editor de la Revista Colombiana de Psiquiatría

<sup>b</sup> Facultad de Medicina, Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia

E-mail address: [cpalacio.palacio@gmail.com](mailto:cpalacio.palacio@gmail.com)

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