


Health sciences education and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic

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ABSTRACT

At the end of January 2020, the WHO declared that the COVID-19 epidemic constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, and in March it became a pandemic. After his arrival in Brazil, several protective measures were taken by the authorities, the main one being social distancing. This study aimed to discuss the main changes in the teaching-learning method that emerged during the pandemic, as well as how these changes impact health teaching throughout Brazil. The great challenge of teachers regarding remote teaching was the training of future health professionals, who need to train, stimulate the formation of clinical reasoning, integrate theory and practice, use of active teaching and learning methodologies and curricular flexibility. In addition, another challenge witnessed was learning how to use new information and communication technologies in the distance learning modality to continue their teaching process. The current context shows that health teachers and students are inserted in a context that favors mental illness caused by COVID-19. Therefore, the pandemic has affected all areas of education, as well as health teaching, requiring the training of teachers as well as psycho-emotional support to overcome the challenges they encounter.

Keywords: Health teaching, Education in the Pandemic, Health education.

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INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, pneumonia of unknown cause began in a group of patients in Wuhan, China. This disease is Covid-19, a disease caused by the coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2 (ZHU *et al.*, 2020). At the end of January 2020, the WHO (World Health Organization) declared that the COVID-19 epidemic constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, and in March it became a pandemic (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2020).

After his arrival in Brazil, several protective measures were taken by the authorities. One of them is social distancing, which proposes to reduce the continuous flow of people, both in public and private places. This practice has always been very controversial in the country. Several population areas were affected by this procedure, especially schools and universities, affecting thousands of students throughout the country (FARIAS; PIRES, 2020).

According to the establishment of social distancing, there was a need to reassess the teaching-learning process, including in the health area (medicine, nursing, psychology, physiotherapy, among others). Currently, remote teaching, called homeschooling, is being used in most educational institutions around Brazil. However, several gaps are created in the learning of these students and future health professionals (GOMES *et al.*, 2020).

Both students and teachers go through several challenges related to the teaching-learning process, especially those related to the presence of the student in the health service, each higher education institution (HEI) must evaluate its institutional organization, as well as the epidemiological conditions in order to follow a better path for the teaching of health courses (RODRIGUES *et al.*, 2020).

Health education has also been hampered in the context of the pandemic, as the courses are mostly practical. Higher education institutions in health, as well as teachers, were not prepared for radical changes in their way of teaching. The distance study model helped, but has limitations, especially in the course of health, which is essentially practical, requiring contact with patients (RODRIGUES *et al.*, 2020).

In addition, the abrupt change in the teaching model directly affected the mental health of health teachers. They have great difficulty in using digital technologies in the new pedagogical model, causing anxious staff due to the non-fulfillment of managers' demands (ARAÚJO *et al.*, 2020; WANG *et al.*, 2020)

This study aimed to discuss the main changes in the teaching-learning method that emerged during the pandemic, as well as how these changes impact health teaching throughout Brazil. Both students and teachers were analyzed, and the impact of distance learning on this relationship was analyzed.



DEVELOPMENT

The concept of teaching-learning has undergone profound changes in the area of education and health, and the teacher's ability to keep up with pedagogical trends is paramount. Both health and education have contact, communication, and care at their core, being important in the experience of learning and teaching (GOMES, 2020; CAMPOS, 2021).

The current pandemic has made it necessary to rethink and resignify concepts and experiences in teaching and learning. In the area of health, the Ministry of Education Ordinances Nos. 2,253/2001, 4,059/2004 and 1,134/2016 were made official to offer curricular components in the distance modality. Education managers were forced to innovate in pedagogical and academic strategies, maintaining the principles of education, its guidelines and laws, aiming to integrate new information and communication technologies and the use of digital platforms. This change already reflects the difficulties of the students' teaching-learning process, since about 40% of the course is carried out in a practical way, in contact with patients, pathologies and care in this context (BEZERRA, 2020).

National and global changes in labor legislation, the expansion of private institutions, and the decline in stable employment have impacted teaching activity. This has generated, as a consequence, a precariousness and intensification of work (SANTOS *et al.*, 2021). Teachers had to adapt, along with their home routines. This demonstrated that several teachers in the health area were not prepared to include technologies, since the training did not include their use, and it was necessary to update and train teachers, in order to maintain the quality of teaching (GONZALEZ *et al.*, 2020; KIM *et al.*, 2020).

The modification of strategies to adapt teaching to students by new virtual technologies. Most health institutions did not have methodologies that used remote technology in their curricula. The great challenge of teachers regarding remote teaching was the training of future health professionals, who need to train, stimulate the formation of clinical reasoning, integrate theory and practice, use of active teaching and learning methodologies and curricular flexibility. In addition, other challenges faced by health teachers in the current context were learning how to use new information and communication technologies in the distance learning modality to continue their teaching process (BEZERRA; JOWSEY, 2020)

The current context shows that university professors, including health professors, are inserted in a context that favors mental illness caused by COVID-19. This is caused by the numerous news of morbidity and mortality, pressures suffered by Higher Education Institutions, personal life and the stress load caused by the pandemic in the fear of death. Several students had their health achieved due to goals set by the institution that were not met and the pressure suffered in the new educational context and technologies (MCKIMM *et al.*, 2020)



Studies reveal that the chance of teachers presenting stress, depression and anxiety is twice as high when compared to other professions, because in Brazil, they occupy the second place in occupational diseases. Research shows illness caused by uncertainty, stress, anxiety, and depression, causing *burnout syndrome* (ARAÚJO et al., 2020). The main mental disorders found by teachers accused by the COVID-19 pandemic were depressive disorders, bipolar affective disorder, anxiety, and *burnout syndrome* (SHAW, 2020; WANG, 2020).

The pandemic also affects students' mental health. The migration from face-to-face to digital teaching, uncertainties about teaching, the future and fear of illness favor mental illness. The pre-existence of a psychiatric condition favors the emergence or worsening of a psychiatric condition. It is necessary to protect the mental health of future medical professionals by higher education institutions, manage stress and psychosocial well-being. It is necessary to create or improve psychosocial support centers for students with easy access to preserve mental health in the pandemic scenario. The use of distance technology that is used for classes can be used in the psychological care that is offered by the institution to the student (RODRIGUES et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

Therefore, the pandemic has affected all areas of education, as well as health teaching. It is necessary that managers of higher education modify distance education training that enables educational professionals to use the technologies of the teaching-learning process, improving the quality of student learning. In addition, it is necessary to create virtual spaces with multidisciplinary teams that can provide psycho-emotional support to both teachers and students, since the new context favors the emergence and aggravation of psychological and psychiatric disorders.



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