


The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health: A literature review

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ABSTRACT

The pandemic caused by the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) has modified, in countless ways, the psychosocial behavior of the population. Quarantine, updates provided by social media, and the rising number of deaths were some of the contributing factors. This is a descriptive study that seeks to analyze the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of the population. Among the main groups impacted, health professionals on the front line of care, patients hospitalized in Intensive Care Units, patients with previously diagnosed psychiatric conditions, and those who have lost someone in their social life stand out. Medical and psychological follow-up of the population is essential, aiming at their mental well-being.

Keywords: Psychiatry, COVID-19.

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INTRODUCTION

The pandemic caused by the *Coronavirus Disease* (COVID-19), a disease caused by the new coronavirus (SARS-CoV 2), has resulted in numerous changes in the psychosocial behavior of the population.

With the need to contain the emergence of new cases and interrupt the chain of transmission of the disease, quarantine was decreed as a prophylactic measure. As a result, everyday life was filled with feelings of fear and uncertainty.

The need to stay at home associated with the decrease in social interaction and social interaction has driven the emergence and worsening of numerous psychiatric disorders, negatively impacting the mental health of individuals. In addition, the growing number of deaths and the constant updates on the scenario, until then, on social media were factors that triggered the psychological illness of the population.

The increase in unemployment, the intensification of social inequalities and food insecurity can also be pointed out as some of the factors responsible for the sequelae left in individuals who are more prone to psychological and emotional illness.

METHOD

This work consists of a descriptive study whose objective is to analyze the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of the population.

The data sources used in this article were *PubMed* and the *Scientific Electronic Library Online* (*Scielo*) and the keywords used during the research were "Psychiatry" and "Covid".

DISCUSSION

The way in which psychiatric disorders manifest clinically, as well as their triggering factors, vary according to each individual's personal experiences. Social relationships, family ties, daily routine, work environment, cultural and socioeconomic conditions, among others, are some of the factors that influence the individual perception of mental disorders.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous social segments were affected by psychopathologies. Health professionals, especially those who were on the front line of population care, were commonly exposed to physical and mental exhaustion due to strenuous working hours, often scarce individual safety, and the difficult decisions they had to make in favor of caring for the sick they assisted.

Patients, on the other hand, especially those admitted to Intensive Care Units (ICU), were subject to situations of uncertainty about their prognosis and the outcome of their clinical condition. The invasive procedures to which they were subjected, the (long) stay in a hospital environment, and



the clinical and functional repercussions left by COVID-19 resulted in numerous cases of stress, generalized anxiety disorder, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The overload in health facilities and the difficulty of access to services also exerted a great influence on this process. Due to the high demand for care for suspected cases of COVID-19, many individuals were unable to renew medical prescriptions for medications for continuous use, leading to an uncontrolled number of psychiatric disorders already under treatment.

The high mortality and lethality rates also compromised the psychosocial integrity of the population. Both the fear and worry of contracting the disease and progressing to death, as well as the loss of people in their social life, can trigger numerous psychological signs and symptoms, such as anxiety, impulsivity, panic and stress.

CONCLUSION

Generalized anxiety disorder; major depressive disorder; substance abuse, such as alcohol and drugs; PTSD; social phobia and bipolar disorder were some of the disorders driven and aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is essential that measures are taken to ensure the mental health of the population. Regular medical and psychological follow-up, active listening to patients and the development of collective activities, especially related to the practice of physical activity and group therapy are some of the solutions found to cope with the problem.



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