

PANDEMIC EVENTS AND PSYCHIATRY: SOME SPECIFICITIES AND SINGULARITIES IN COVID-19

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Introduction

The global impact caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) remains not possible to measure clearly. Specifically, in the mental health field, Anjum et al. (2020) warned the necessity to know more about the psychological and psychiatry features from the perceptions of the global public. An editorial regarding mental health in pandemic events (Vigo et al. 2020), the authors highlighted some impacts of COVID-19 in specific contexts: general population; substance use disorders; people who provide essential services; and people infected by the virus. Despite the constructive proposal to foster segments of discussion, there are some aspects in COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic that are singular and distinct from other pandemics.

The current commentary presented some aspects of the COVID-19 that are singular, and that differs from the other infections. According to Vigo et al. (2020), many specialists foretold that viral pandemics were inevitable. However, what characteristics are specifics in the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic to consider? What the relationship between these characteristics and the mental health field?

In this direction, another study (Rogers et al. 2020) regarding the relationship between mental health and pandemic scenarios presented significant contributions when analyzing the real and possible consequences provoked by the novel coronavirus. Rogers et al. (2020) assessed the psychiatric and neuropsychiatric presentations of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS – 2002), Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS – 2012), and COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2). According to Rogers et al. (2020), if the infection of SARS-CoV-2 follows a similar trajectory to SARS or MERS, most patients should not develop mental illness.

All condition or state of illness needs to be interpreted and comprehend from multiple perspectives. By biological domain, the COVID-19 can provoke acute respiratory tract infection and the higher transmission rate could be caused by a genetic recombination event at S protein in the receptor-binding domain (RBD) of the novel coronavirus (Shereen et al. 2020). In the mental health field, these pathogenic characteristics must be understood at least by the intersection with social and psychological interferences.

Uncertainties of treatments in a globalized world

Some distinct and singular characteristics of novel coronavirus brought many uncertainties in diagnostic, prognostic, and treatments. These domains of uncertainties have demonstrated various challenges and extreme dangers. The gaps of some specificities of COVID-19 have been taken advantage of by multiple agents and interests.

In a highly technological and globalized world, serious scientists and clinicians can use uncertainty to learn and develop many advances in treatments. On the other hand, the uncertainties are an ideal 'ingredients' to compose a destructive speech or foster social tragedies.

In the current scenario, many of these distortions do not situate out of the science field. On the contrary, depending on interest, all uncertainties, limitations, or not fully defined responses have been understood as science. Some certainties but still not fully efficacy is classified as unscientific. One of these negative consequences is that the passing of half-truth status to truths has been a matter of conviction.

The consequences of uncertainties in psychological domains

The speed at which the virus develops in the body and its easy contagion associated with the speed of information transmission tends to potentiate the predisposition to high levels of anxiety and distress. Multiple and distinct interests from media, economy, and politics tend to potentiate many mental suffering levels.

According to Kierkegaard (1981), the anxiety associated with uncertainty fosters reviewing one's values and beliefs and corroborates the development of personalities and healthy functioning. However, it is hazardous to totalize this affirmation because extended periods of uncertainties provoke the contrary results.

Another aspect of analyzing refers to the characteristics of the pandemic scenario. The global events that affect a large number of people demonstrate specific characteristics to consider. The tension atmosphere favors dangerous actions of mass destruction. In psychoanalytic terms (Freud 2004), the actuation of unconsciousness has fostered in collective contexts, including by destructive way.

Conclusions

The novel coronavirus is situated in a historical moment where ideological perspectives influence or determine the delimitations and role of science. The veracity or falsity of information is a crucial axis of analysis to consider in the COVID-19 pandemic. The consequences of this axis have determined how many lives will be preserved or no.

The relationship between different scenarios is valid and essential. However, it is necessary careful not to reduce different conjectures in different moments. These reflections imply to develop and mature many areas of psychiatry and mental health. In this way, the complex scenario that the world is due now requires complex bases to analyses the factors that cross the individual experience from as many perspectives as possible, including mental health.

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