

## Nothing will be as it was: Effects of the pandemic on young people's mental health

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When intensely investigated, many topics can produce a sensation of exhaustion. In its omnipresence, the COVID-19 pandemic will permeate our research studies and interventions for many years to come, especially in the mental health field. Here, it is not a matter of delimiting the end of the pandemic period as a message that in fact decrees its closure. This is because its effects, still being discovered and updated, may be with us for a long time, so that research studies will need to position themselves in the face of this movement. Obviously, the most evident ailments seem to have been compared by some of the already published studies<sup>(1)</sup>; however, at this moment we are experiencing the follow-up of a path that cannot be described without referring to the pandemic and its various reverberations.

A starting point in this reflection is retrieval of the title of this text, in reference to the homonymous song, "*Nada será como antes*" ("Nothing will be as it was"), composed by Milton Nascimento and Ronaldo Bastos in the 1970s in the midst of the Military Dictatorship. Widely referred to in titles of scientific articles and essays especially produced during the pandemic transit, this song seems to synthesize several tensions provoked from that period. Noting the recurrence of this title, instead of modifying it, we try to think about the meaning effects produced by retrieval of the verse that imposes, in one of its interpretations, the idea of renewal, change, overcoming something towards what comes, what establishes a new possibility. In part, this seems to fit the moment in which we live. In part, it does not. This is because the emergence of mental health issues among young people was already widely referred to in the scientific literature even before the pandemic period<sup>(2)</sup>. Many of them have even been made invisible or raised to a status of "novelty" since the pandemic.

Then, it is up to us to ask (as is the case with another expressive number of article titles): Will nothing be as it was? Which changes and which unchanged aspects in the field of young people's mental health can be mentioned? In the scientific literature, studies and reflections are growing that are based on the possible effects of the pandemic in the short-, medium- and even long-term, even impacting the next generations<sup>(3-6)</sup>.

In a comprehensive way, the mental health of the young population covers the period of adolescence and the beginning of adult life. It is during this period, which is already known to be marked by several transformations, that

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the effects of the pandemic seem to be most important. Specifically, when we think of the university population, a wide range of knowledge has been produced, including screening studies<sup>(3-6)</sup> and evaluations of interventions and programs, as well as reports of the most varied professional experiences with this population group<sup>(7)</sup>, from more specific actions to larger projects. Innovations are suggested in these publications, expanding the possibilities of intervening with these young people considering the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, for example, which greatly increased the field of online and group interventions<sup>(8)</sup>. Increasingly, it is essential to evaluate young people who enter universities (and who experienced the greatest mobilization of the pandemic when they attended High School and even Elementary School), and those who went through the pandemic at the beginning, in mid-level courses at university and in its completion. In addition, it is permissible to monitor those who entered the job market shortly after the peak of the pandemic, with training strongly impacted by this period.

In the university management field, the mental health agenda emerges, imposing the need for educational policies to rethink the role of the university, moving towards greater acceptance of its students, greater inclusion and belonging<sup>(7)</sup>. This is the case, for example, of the University of São Paulo which, in May 2022, approved the creation of the Dean's Office for Inclusion and Belonging (*Pró-Reitoria de Inclusão e Pertencimento*, PRIP), which aims at proposing, coordinating and supporting inclusion and permanence actions for students, teachers and servants. The action topics involve mental health, ethnic-racial relations, gender issues, disabilities, socioeconomic inequalities and human rights, vertices that are directly related to student welcoming. Thus, health, especially mental health, ceases to be a field of exclusive responsibility of the students and their families, starting to comprise a list of reflections on which managers begin to produce less specific and more global actions towards a concept of a truly integrating and inclusive university that produces well-being.

The theme of young people's mental health is merely one example of how the pandemic has moved away from the concept of "event", which can imply a sense of transience, and has become a "marker". In the practice, this is equivalent to conceiving the need to no longer locate the effects associated with something that occurred in time, notably between 2020 and 2022, but imposing a new way of looking at subjects in distress. In the most diverse topics related to mental health, this issue of *SMAD - Revista Eletrônica Saúde Mental, Álcool e Drogas* reveals this movement based on the articles herein gathered.

The first article that comprises this issue is entitled "**Meanings attributed to smoking by people living with HIV**", by Ligia Lopes Devóglia, Giovanna Bento Paulino, Marli Teresinha Cassamassimo Duarte and Ilda de Godoy. This is a qualitative study developed at the "Júlio de Mesquita Filho" São Paulo State University, Botucatu campus. Interviews were conducted with 38 smokers living with HIV treated at specialized outpatient services in inland São Paulo. Among the meanings produced by the participants, mostly men, is the association of tobacco use with a sensation of pleasure and decreased anxiety, being a drug strongly present in these patients' everyday life. In an ambivalent way, meanings linked to hatred and harms to health also emerged, which cannot be understood, in their experiences, in a way that is dissociated from the health-disease-care processes due to HIV.

Subsequently, Giovanni Francioni Kuhn and Roger dos Santos Rosa, researchers from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, present the study called "**Ratio between outpatient and inpatient care: An indicator for the mental health**", which sought to create a mathematical ratio indicator between these types of care in the SUS context. Based on secondary data from residents in the Metropolitan Region of Porto Alegre - RS during the 2015-2017 period, a bimodal distribution was observed with higher ratios between outpatient and in-hospital appointments in the age groups from 0 to 19 and from 45 to 59 years old. The authors attest that understanding this phenomenon can contribute to better organization and management of the Psychosocial Care Network in the SUS, with the mathematical ratio as a possible indicator of information quality. As this survey covers the pre-pandemic period, the possibility of carrying out new studies is considered in view of the possible changes that have occurred, especially from 2020 onwards.

The third article, "**Caring and repressing: 25 years of public policies in Cracolândia**", was developed by Ygor Diego Delgado Alves and Pedro Paulo Gomes Pereira, from the Federal University of São Paulo. The bibliographical study analyzed the interventions in *Cracolândia* from São Paulo, following public policies from 1995 to 2020. According to the authors, these policies act simultaneously to provide care to and repress crack users. Dividing this 25-year period into two phases, it is noted that, as of 2013, more educational and care programs aimed at this population segment were observed, although violence "has persisted as a characteristic sign of prolonged necropolitics in the region". Monitoring these different moments of the policies aimed at this population group can contribute to the development of less stigmatizing care models that oppose the use of violence in understanding this phenomenon.

The study called "**Adolescents with Substance Use Disorders: Profile, self-esteem and mental disorders**", by Jefferson Luiz Pereira, Denise Gimenez Ramos and Sofia Marques Viana Ulisses, from the Pontifical

Catholic University of São Paulo, evaluated 82 male adolescents. The group of adolescents diagnosed with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) admitted to a psychiatric hospital revealed high levels of school dropout, involvement in legal infringements, mood indicators and depressive thoughts, in addition to lowered self-esteem when compared to a group of adolescents with SUD diagnoses. The authors recommend that the treatment of SUD in adolescents should be multidisciplinary, considering the reference context and the characteristics of this developmental stage.

The study called "**Factors associated with heavy episodic drinking among college students**", conducted by a group of researchers from the State University of Northern Paraná, the State University of Londrina, the University of São Paulo and the Federal University of Mato Grosso, sought to identify the prevalence and factors associated with episodic excessive alcohol consumption in university students. The authors found that the prevalence of episodic excessive consumption was 43.3% and that, among other factors, it was associated with the fact that these young individuals do not live with their family and, above all, with psychoactive substance use. The authors recommend that university managers increase policies and programs that discuss this issue with these students, as well as promote objective prevention actions.

Also working with the university population, the article called "**Prevalence of common mental disorders in university students during the COVID-19 pandemic**" was conducted by a group of researchers from the State and Federal Universities of Piauí. Screening for symptoms of common mental disorders in students at a public university in Piauí during the pandemic, the authors identified 58.7% prevalence of psychological distress, greatly affecting female, young and single individuals. The study corroborates several others developed throughout the pandemic<sup>(3-6)</sup>, evidencing the vulnerability of the university population with regard to mental health.

Subsequently, the article called "**Occupational Therapy groups with family members in mental health: The perception of caregivers of people with schizophrenia**", developed by Lígia Beatriz Romeiro Rôse, Leonardo Martins Kebbe and Luiz Jorge Pedrão from the University of São Paulo, analyzed the effects of this group monitoring on the care of people diagnosed with schizophrenia, from the perspective of family caregivers. These groups constituted spaces for the exchange of experiences and understanding of situations related to schizophrenia, contributing to the differentiation of symptoms, to non-reinforcement of dependent behaviors and, in a broad way, as an opportunity to listen to these caregivers, who are often overloaded. The authors conclude by indicating this interventional model for the elaboration of coping strategies and greater recognition of family support in this context.


Finally, the last article that comprises this issue is entitled "**Satisfaction of people assisted at Psychosocial Care Centers during the COVID-19 pandemic**", by Wêdson Ferreira dos Santos from the Municipality of Ouricuri – PE, in partnership with researchers from the University of São Paulo, the State University of Pará and the Regional University of Cariri. The survey was carried out between the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 in Psychosocial Care Centers in the Pernambuco X Health Region. Overall satisfaction was considered high, with emphasis on the welcoming promoted by the teams, which may reveal that such devices proved to be continent for mental health needs, especially during the pandemic period.

We hope that these studies gathered in this issue may heat up discussions in the mental health field, inviting both researchers and health professionals and students to a debate that, unequivocally, should be woven considering the effects of the pandemic. We hope that public policies in the mental health field, involving professional practices and knowledge construction in an associated way, may commit to advances, also considering the previously existing scenario. We cannot abandon the achievements and we need to reassert, at all times, that mental health cannot be promoted in a scenario of exclusion, of astonishment to democracy and the reproduction of fake news that impact not only the search for treatment, but the very appreciation of the existing assistance policies. The "*amanhã*" ("tomorrow"), sung in the title song of this presentation, does not need to impose itself without the past, but rather invest in the reconstruction of ties and bonds that permanently link us to our history and our commitment to what will come. In the youth field, the need to rebuild and strengthen bonds is an urgent recommendation, allowing self-writing.

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