

# Towards the design of holistic mental health programs in the student population

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, society experienced many changes in daily life; the limitation of social activities led to drastic changes in how interpersonal relationships were conceived. The impact of the pandemic was vast in various spheres, such as economy, politics, education, and health. The effect of the pandemic on education is a complex issue because it leads to discussing student-teacher, student-student, and teacher-teacher relationships; the dynamics of interaction migrated to environments facilitated by technology, each educational level and school discipline have particular experiences of the pandemic impact on their daily lives, undoubtedly all equally interesting. Still, particularly one discipline that the pandemic drastically affected is medical education. The social expectation of the medical profession is very high. During the pandemic, they became heroes, and in turn, some members of society saw them as possible viral vectors, which added to the general fear of the pandemic. Medical education is a complex area of clinical professional training, and it is a scientific and humanistic discipline, so the importance of human interaction is necessary and part of entire study programs. In general, medical and health sciences students need to develop competencies and social skills, which in basic training cycles are integrated into the hidden curriculum and are evaluated through the dynamics in the face-to-face setting. This abrupt change in the teaching and learning process in health sciences led to social isolation, higher suicidal ideation, emotional exhaustion, decreased physical activity, and depression, among others. Published reports on the impact of the pandemic on health sciences students are vast (Carpi & Vestri, 2023; Pitanupong, Sathaporn, Ittasakul, & Karawekpanyawong, 2023), a good part of them coming from developed countries; however, in Latin American countries, there is limited evidence. It is crucial to make visible the studies carried out in the region, one with the most significant social vulnerability to the pandemic. This monothematic number seeks to report the studies carried out in Latin America that address the issue of mental health in education in health sciences. The monothematic comprises nine articles that address the issue of mental health from different methodological perspectives, all of which are undoubtedly very valuable for understanding the mental health challenges that we must address post-pandemic. In this sense, it is worth inviting mental health and medical education specialists to continue documenting how the post-pandemic student population is, both in adapting to the new normality (gradual and controlled opening of social spaces) and in the complete opening of social spaces. Although the pandemic is getting closer to ending, its implications on the health status of those who suffered from it (both directly and indirectly) are not over yet.

Educators and heads of education in health sciences are responsible for detecting and promoting mental health care and promotion programs, which in turn contribute to the construction of healthy coexistence environments. This monothematic presents works that demonstrate the efforts made by educational institutions to improve the mental health of students, such as online mindfulness sessions and psychiatry courses. In addition, evaluations of psychosomatic manifestations, depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal ideation, quality of sleep, physical activity, and resilience are presented in university students during the pandemic. On the other hand, the monothematic includes an article on the statistical validation of the Psychological Well-Being Scale in Mexican medical students, which will

undoubtedly be a work that will be used for various studies in our country. The papers presented come from Peru, Colombia, and Mexico, multicultural countries in Latin America which have diverse training programs in health sciences but converge in many ways through Latin American philosophy.

The mental health of our students is a big task that the various educational actors must face together, involving and working with educators, psychologists, teachers, psychiatrists, academic counselors, university authorities, students, and parents. Each of us from the action nucleus can work on programs articulated and directed by mental health experts that combine different objectives, action methodology, strategic activities, and the ability to be evaluated to know the global and particular impact on our student population. Teachers interested in our students' biopsychosocial development must strive to design this type of holistic program

that goes beyond the screening of factors but instead carry out actions and evaluate their impact from various scientific research paradigms. It is essential to add activities, wills, and experiences that translate into real, participatory, and purposeful explosions that favorably impact our students' mental health.

## REFERENCES

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