

Introduction: COVID-19 outbreak has significantly affected the mental health of people worldwide. The first wave of the pandemic began during the beginning of March 2020, and included significant preventative measures. Previous research on mental health differences between the genders has found that women were more likely to exhibit symptoms of anxiety during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Objectives: The aim of our study was to assess the differences between the genders in depression, anxiety, and stress.

Methods: An online survey designed for the purposes of this study was distributed using the snowballing method during April and May of 2020. The survey consisted of two parts: sociodemographic and clinical data, and COVID-19 related data. Participants also filled out the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) - a well validated, self-questionnaire instrument. T-test for independent samples was used to evaluate the differences between the genders.

Results: Out of the initially sent 563 surveys, a total of 161 were included in further analyses (28.6% response rate). Mean age of the sample was 42.2 ± 10.2 and 65.2% of the participants were female. Mean scores on DASS-21 were as follows: 8.78 ± 6.66 on depression, 9.78 ± 7.39 on anxiety and 7.76 ± 7.14 on stress. Females scored significantly higher on depression ($t = -2.25$, $p = 0.029$), anxiety ($t = -2.25$, $p = 0.028$), stress ($t = -2.44$, $p = 0.017$), and total DASS-21 score ($t = -2.44$, $p = 0.016$).

Conclusions: The results of our study imply that female participants exhibit higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. Larger, population-based studies could provide a more in-depth answer to the importance of these differences for the general population.

Keywords: COVID-19; Gender differences; DASS-21; Anxiety

EPP0333

TV or not TV? health information, anxiety and stress during the initial stage of COVID-19 epidemic in Italy.

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doi: 10.1192/j.eurpsy.2021.727

Introduction: With the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, there has been the dissemination of an enormous amount of information, through multiple channels, from different sources and with an often unverifiable basis (infodemic). In recent years, there has been debate in the literature about the possibility that different information channels (social media vs traditional media) can determine a more or less extensive emotional contagion regardless of the severity and direct exposure to the stressful event and more precisely through a 'secondhand' exposure to events.

Objectives: We want to investigate whether the information channel or the amount of time dedicated to the update is associated with greater psychological sequelae.

Methods: This study is based on a cross-sectional online survey conducted anonymously in the period between the tenth and seventeenth day of shelter in place in Italy. We used Zung Anxiety Self-Assessment Scale and Perceived Stress Scale 4. SPSS 21.0 was used for data analysis.

Results: We collected data on 1047 individuals. In our sample, the Internet was the primary health information channel (55%) followed by TV (36%). Most TV and internet users spend about 1-3 hours a day

for the update. There was no correlation between the time spent or the information channel used and higher levels of stress and anxiety.

Conclusions: In our opinion, this relationship between the time spent receiving information or the most widely used information channel and psychological disorders is not clear. Is it the news channel causing an emotional contagion or are the most anxious people looking for news anywhere and anytime?

Keywords: health information; TV; Internet; emotional contagion

EPP0334

Suicide: The pandemic inside the pandemic

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doi: 10.1192/j.eurpsy.2021.728

Introduction: Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by the WHO on March 11th and efforts have been made to minimize the impact that this new disease can produce. The mental health effects of this pandemic can be severe considering that each year close to 800.000 people die by suicide. This pandemic could increase those numbers, although this is not inevitable.

Objectives: This work reviewed the current available data on possible causes for a suicide rate increase and to try to understand if suicide is already increasing worldwide.

Methods: Non-systematic review of the literature with selection of scientific articles published in the past 6 months; by searching Pubmed and Medscape databases using the combination of MeSH descriptors. The following MeSH terms were used: Covid-19; suicide; SARS-Cov2; pandemic.

Results: Multiple factors can account for an increase in suicide rates such as isolation with a sense of decreased belongingness and increased burdensomeness. A synergy with known suicide precipitants can also occur such as domestic violence, intra-familial conflicts, alcohol consumption and access to means. Media communication can represent a danger with constant reports about the crisis. And lastly the loss of employment and financial stressors can produce an important impact.

Conclusions: In conclusion, Covid-19 will produce an important impact in many spheres of society, one of which will be mental health. If at the start of this crisis a widespread sense of solidarity was present with the maintenance of precipitant factors for suicide we expect to see an increase in suicide rates.

Keywords: COVID-19; Suicide; SARS-Cov2

EPP0335

Changes in sleep quality amidst COVID-19 pandemic among psychiatric patients in Romania

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doi: 10.1192/j.eurpsy.2021.729

Introduction: Sleep disturbances can occur as a result of major stressful events. Additionally, research evidence suggests that

COVID-19 pandemic may have negatively impacted the quality of sleep among various populations. However, individuals respond differently to the stress, uncertainty and social isolation related with COVID-19 pandemic.

Objectives: This study aimed to explore the changes in sleep quality and pattern among voluntary psychiatric patients visiting our clinic in Romania during COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods: We implemented a cross-sectional study over a period of 3 months, utilizing a Romanian-translated version of the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) which was administered through Google Forms web application. Participants lacking digital skills were provided with guidance for completing the questionnaire. Informed consent was obtained prior to participating in this study and data anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

Results: Among a total of 98 responders, 63% reported a global PSQI score greater than 5, indicating poor sleep. Approximately 25% of participants subjectively marked their sleep as either fairly bad or very bad. When analysing the 7 components of PSQI, our participants struggled most with long sleep latency. About a third of participants reported using sleep medication (both prescription and over-the-counter) three or more times a week within the past month.

Conclusions: Considering the fact that the current situation is likely to evolve for an unknown period of time, there is a dire need to assess the effect of prolonged adjustments in daily routine and their impact on the sleep and the quality of life of our patients.

Keywords: COVID-19; sleep quality; Insomnia

EPP0336

The individual patterns of anxieties and defense mechanisms in COVID pandemic context

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doi: 10.1192/j.eurpsy.2021.730

Introduction: The COVID-pandemic context is characterized by a global ambiguity, reflecting the unexpected onset of pandemic, unpredictability and amplitude of the related dangers, questionability and the side effects of the policy measures used to protect people.

Objectives: The development of theoretical framework for understanding variability in the reactions to COVID situation and self-regulatory mechanisms.

Methods: Conceptualization and analysis of individual psychotherapy cases in the framework of psychodynamic approach.

Results: Five typical patterns of anxiety, defensive functioning and mentalization structures were identified: Paranoial pattern is marked by flooding with persecutory anxiety, exaggerated subjective uncertainty, reflected in chaotic boundlessness, incoherence, fantasies of hostility, splitting and polarization of self and others. Depressive pattern reflects inability to sustain ambiguity due to deficiency of internal supports, overly dependence on others, conformity, obedience to authority and denial of personal standards and individuality. Noogenic pattern refers to negative affective states, generated by the ambiguity, contradictions and ambivalence of information. The means to regulate it include the lowering of the level of psychical functioning, with cognitive simplification, preference for order, routine and predictability.

Transgression pattern suggests maniacal fascination with the dissipation of limits, normative restraints and rules, and the triumph of the narcissistic-perfectionist permissiveness. Constructivity pattern consists of the pleasure from explorations and insights, creation of new meanings, creative reappraisal and reconstruction of ambiguous situations.

Conclusions: The typical patterns of experiencing ambiguity that were singled out may have diagnostic and prognostic significance in evaluating the individual resource potential in situations of COVID related dangers and isolation.

Keywords: Covid; mentalization; psychological defences; self-regulation

EPP0337

Prevalence of depressive and anxiety symptoms in chronically ill children and adolescents during COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown: Preliminary findings of a pediatric hospital in Italy.

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doi: 10.1192/j.eurpsy.2021.731

Introduction: Psychological problems are common among the pediatric population suffering from a chronic illness, especially compared to the normal population. Stressful life events, such as social distancing measures implemented to counter the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, can strongly influence their epidemiology.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to assess the prevalence rate of depressive and anxiety symptoms among an Italian pediatric population affected by chronic illness and already under a Children Hospital psychological follow-up program during COVID-19 lockdown.

Methods: We conducted a cross-sectional study among 54 Italian children and adolescents affected by chronic illness (mean age: 15y; range: 8.9-18y) during the COVID-19 epidemic period. We assessed depressive and anxiety symptoms with the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) and the Generalized Anxiety Disorders (GAD-7) questionnaire during scheduled follow-up checks or teleconsulting.

Results: Preliminary results showed an elevated prevalence of depressive and anxiety symptoms (51% and 48% respectively) among chronically ill children during the COVID-19 outbreak. When compared with a non-ill pediatric population (Zhou et al. 2020), rates are + 7.3% higher for depression and + 10.6% for anxiety.

Conclusions: Chronic ill pediatric patients are a vulnerable group and require careful consideration. For this reason, the healthcare system should be able to implement and guarantee adequate mental health support programs and continuity of care. Further research is necessary since the COVID-19 outbreak could be repeated.

Keywords: COVID-19; Anxiety; Depression; pediatric chronic illness