



Editorial

The possible recrudescence of the COVID-19 in autumn requires the utmost care in applying the rules of prevention that we all know by now: surgical mask, spacing, frequent sanitization, temperature measurement and avoiding crowded places. These precautions must all the more be applied in the facilities of mental health departments. A very recent article in publication in issue 1/2021 of the newspaper of the World Psychiatric Association identify individuals with a recent diagnosis of a mental disorder as being at increased risk for COVID-19 infection, which is further exacerbated among African Americans and women, and as having a higher frequency of some adverse outcomes of the infection including death ¹. Since the beginning of the pandemic, it is believed that people with mental disorders are more likely to become ill than COVID-19. This is due to the unhealthy lifestyle, lack of attention to precautions and the worst physical health conditions compared to the general population. The statistical evidence that these hypotheses are real must be an incentive as psychiatrists to engage in prevention activities. As mental health practitioners we must set an example by always wearing masks, washing our hands frequently, sanitizing workplaces and maintaining precautionary physical distances. We must also avoid meetings of more people in cramped places, especially now that the cold weather will often prevent the windows from being opened. As far as was observed in the Italian mental health departments even in the regions most affected by the first phase of the pandemic COVID+ cases have been registered amongst both staff members (52% of CHMCs), and facility users (52% of CHMCs), although slightly lower rates have been reported for residents living in RFs (less than 40% of RF). As expected, a significantly higher number of cases have been reported in the Northern Italian regions, i.e. areas featuring the highest rates of infection. Mental health services in Italy during the COVID-19 pandemia ².

As we know, during the pandemic, psychiatry services' activity continued in a reduced way in the first phase, while in the second phase there was a return to a higher level of daily clinical activity than before the beginning of the pandemic. Hospital and outpatient activity resumed at full capacity only semi-residential activity was kept reduced with the resumption of only small groups in attendance. The residential psychiatric facilities that have been equipped with entry and discharge protocols in addition to the regulation of visits and the use of telemedicine tools deserve a separate discussion. The apartment groups, on the other hand, have behaved similarly to civil housing with greater difficulty in enforcing the lock down of some patients.

The prescription of drugs has continued regularly with some facilitation in the reception for the greater use of the electronic prescription whose number could also be communicated in the pharmacy with a text message, in order to avoid as much as possible contacts in the different steps. The long-standing issue of filling in the useless forms required by AIFA for the prescription of antipsychotics in the elderly had been suspended and it would be appropriate that it would not resume. For years we have been forced to fill out every two months health forms for the prescription of antipsychotics in the BPSD of the elderly without any return on what has been monitored until today. If it made sense to do this monitoring for a couple of years, after such a long time and the generation of most of the molecules is not even an economic advantage in this activity. It appears a useless bureaucratic passage that consumes the time of specialists and general practitioners as well as penalizing patients who if they do not have



Massimo di Giannantonio



Enrico Zanalda

How to cite this article:

di Giannantonio M, Zanalda E. Editorial. Evidence-based Psychiatric Care 2020;6:105-106. <https://doi.org/10.36180/2421-4469-2020-17>

Correspondence:

Massimo di Giannantonio
digiannantonio@unich.it

Enrico Zanalda
enrico.zanalda@yahoo.it

This is an open access article distributed in accordance with the CC-BY-NC-ND (Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International) license. The article can be used by giving appropriate credit and mentioning the license, but only for non-commercial purposes and only in the original version. For further information: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.en>

Open Access



© Copyright by Pacini Editore Srl

the possibility of the specialist's passage are forced to be treated with drugs with greater side effects.

Throughout this fall and next winter, it is worth continuing to use telemedicine tools for counseling and psychotherapy. Where they have been used extensively have proven to be extremely effective tools and are one of the few positive things that the pandemic has brought us. Unfortunately, scientific conferences and training courses should continue remotely in order to reduce travel and contact possibilities. According to the predictions of conference professionals, these restrictions on travel and gatherings will continue for at least the whole of next year 2021. In this sense, the Italian Association of Psychiatry had to move the planned 49 national congress in Genoa by one year and rescheduled it in October 2021 when we hope to convene the national assembly of members. This year 2020 the Italian Society of Psychiatry programs only remote events in compliance with national directives and the health of all members. The general trend of the COVID-19 pandemic will be the yardstick by which the events of 2021 can be planned. According to an estimate by the World Health Organisation, only 10% of the world's population has contracted the disease so far. Therefore, the possible spread of the virus is still a long way off and could affect the next few years until a safe vaccine is found. It is diffi-

cult today to predict when we will be able to return to a life without masks. In the meantime we can engage more in scientific activities from home at a distance such as writing articles and meeting remotely. Perhaps also due to the effect of the COVID-19 this year our society's newspaper will come out this year with the periodicity it had set itself from the beginning and which it had not been able to reach until 2020. We would like to thank the members who contribute in this way to the diffusion of our discipline in Italy and in the world. The link of the magazine is sent to the World Psychiatric Association and other national scientific societies with whom we are in contact.

Massimo di Giannantonio & Enrico Zanalda

References

- 1 Wang Q, Xu R, Volkow ND. Increased risk of COVID-19 infection and mortality in people with mental disorders: analysis from electronic health records in the United States. *World Psychiatry* 2021 online ahead of print.
- 2 Bernardo Carpiello B, Tusconi M, di Sciascio G, et al. Mental health services in Italy during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Psychiatry Clin Neurosci* 2020;74:442-3. doi: 10.1111/pcn.13082