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REVISTA IBERO-AMERICANA DE SALUD Y ENVEJECIMIENTO

## EDITORIAL

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*Mental Health in the Ageing Process*

When we talk about ageing, the word older person immediately comes to our mind. However, aging doesn't start at the age of 65, but from the first moment of life, i.e. when we are born. That's why, for active and healthy ageing, everyday counts. Lifestyle habits from birth, or rather from conception, form part of our life trajectory and influence our ageing process.

I decided to start with this brief approach to ageing to make it clear that mental health promotion should start from the family planning stage, in this case with the new being.

Although mental health has been dormant over the years, with mental disorders being a taboo, there is now greater awareness of its importance throughout the life cycle, i.e. in the ageing process.

Society has undergone substantial changes over time, mainly due to technological advances. While in the past access to information was limited and only the better-off were able to access it, today we have reached the opposite extreme. Nowadays, access to (mis)information is immediate, with just a click of the mouse.

The concept of the family has changed and today parents have less time for their children, with endless hours spent on the screen by both parents and children. There is less conversation, less socializing, and the pandemic has exacerbated this way of living. In schools we see children, teenagers and young people each with their own screen and if one day the screen fails it's as if a catastrophe has occurred. We are social beings, and as such, we need each other to be happy. In physical presence, that is.

All these social changes have led to a significant increase in anxious and depressive symptoms in younger people, with difficulties in managing emotions, making decisions and solving problems. These difficulties interfere with well-being and the ageing process.

Faced with this reality, what can health professionals do to improve this paradigm and promote mental health throughout the life cycle?

I have no doubt that this promotion of mental health should be implemented in primary health care, starting with family planning consultations. First, we need to assess the mental health of the parents-to-be, just as we assess blood pressure. Then an individual mental health care plan should be drawn up, centered on the family. This plan should be developed by the family members with the support of the family nurse, including the various spheres of life that promote mental health. Special attention should be paid to promoting sleep, nutrition, regular physical exercise, pleasurable recreational activities and socializing with friends and family. It is essential that all these spheres are fulfilled to effectively promote mental health. In the postpartum period, special attention should be paid to the mother's

mental health, as this is the period in a woman's life cycle where there is a greater risk of developing mental disorders. In child, adolescent, adult and older adults health consultations, this mental health assessment and the development of an individual care plan must be maintained, taking into account the unique characteristics of each person, their resources and the community context in which they live.

Let's give mental health a voice throughout the life cycle?

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