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Letter to the Editor

Early career psychiatrists in times of crisis[☆]

Los psiquiatras al inicio de su carrera en tiempos de crisis

Dear Editor,

Nearly five months after the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, 14.8 million cases of COVID-19 and more than 600,000 deaths have been reported. A pandemic of this nature turns into a situation that overwhelms the healthcare, social, emotional and economic resources of individuals and communities. Furthermore, not everybody has experienced the pandemic in the same way, as it has been permeated by vulnerabilities imposed by social context.¹ The psychological effects of a situation of this magnitude, including adjustment disorders, affective disorders, post-traumatic stress, complicated grief and psychotic signs and symptoms, have become increasingly evident.²

The COVID-19 pandemic is an enormous challenge that has led to changes in the provision of mental health services all around the world. Although successful experiences with telepsychiatry have been reported in Colombia for some years now,³ their implementation in clinical practice has been far from the norm. However, many young psychiatrists belong to the millennial generation and are well-versed in technology,⁴ facilitating their transition to web-based consultations and making it easier for them to develop and share online resources to promote mental health and to use social media to implement psychosocial support strategies.⁵ In an in-person setting, grand rounds, roundtable discussions, conferences and seminars have led to ceaseless healthcare work by residents and young psychiatrists, even in non-psychiatric services.⁶

In such a scenario, early career psychiatrists play an essential role. For the past 20 years, psychiatrists in training in Colombia have been grouped under the Resident Subcommittee and represented by the Colombian National Chief of Residents before the board of directors of the Asociación Colombiana de Psiquiatría [Colombian Association of Psy-

chiatry]. The definition of "early career psychiatrists" of the World Psychiatry Association (WPA) includes not only residents, but also specialists up to seven years after they have completed their training. Within the WPA, these professionals are grouped in the Section of Early Career Psychiatrists (ECP), with no age limits or membership costs,⁷ and interact with the association's other sections, actively engage in section activities and contribute to many WPA events and programmes.

Involvement in national and transnational professional associations facilitates the exchange of knowledge and experiences in times of crisis. Indeed, this pandemic has brought together various early career psychiatrists with the support of the WPA's ECP Section to join forces and examine different issues related to workforce realities, staff well-being, social determinants of health, telepsychiatry and scales for assessment of pandemic-related mental health symptoms. Their reflections on these matters have been published in various scientific journals around the world.^{1,2,4,8-10} In addition to creating undoubted academic value, these peer groups have become invaluable sources of support and motivation for their members.

We invite all residents and young psychiatrists to join forces with their local and global peers in these times, and we thank them for taking risks and finding creative outlets in the midst of this pandemic.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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