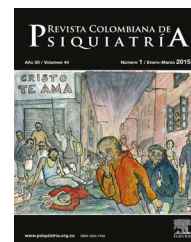




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## Editorial

# Mental Health Research: A commitment from everyone



## Investigación en Salud Mental: Un compromiso de todos

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The current panorama in health research in Colombia, especially in the field of mental health, is still depressing. The local and global problems affecting the mental health of Colombians are far from being a priority for the various public authorities and private entities that fund research.

It is an alarming situation. In spite of the fact that there is clear-cut evidence of elevated prevalence of mental disorders in the world and of the high cost for society that their delayed detection and inadequate treatment generate<sup>1</sup>, research into these pathologies is not a priority in our society<sup>2</sup>. In Colombia, the additional conditions stemming from the high levels of violence over the last few decades raise different challenges for us and for almost all of the professionals that are involved in managing mental problems. Likewise, the management of Colombia's post-conflict future is undoubtedly fraught with uncertainty, but full of opportunities as well, related with the mental health of those involved.

Research is unquestionably a pathway for reaching effective solutions and strategies that allow us to increase the population's quality of life through preventing and treating mental illness. However, Colombia suffers from an alarming imbalance between the current needs and the investment in mental health research. In 2014 the investment for the entirety

of research in the country was 0.19% of the gross domestic product, a figure that lies at an enormous distance from all the other industrialised countries and from many of the countries in the region not remotely sharing our country's chronic and permanent exposure to levels of conflict and inequality<sup>3</sup>. The efforts of some private and public sectors —Colciencias and several universities among them— to strengthen the support for mental health research have been neither constant nor of a significant dimension; just the opposite: it seems that they have decreased. This reduction in support and the announced dependence on royalty payments herald a scarcely promising panorama, dependent on market fluctuations and on unpredictable economic behaviour.

We mental health professionals in Colombia are committed to responding appropriately to the current and future mental health requirements of our patients and of the country. Despite this hostile context, some mental health research groups in Colombia have continued their work, seeking different strategies to respond to present and future social needs. Although they have achieved results of great quality and have appeared in important publications, we are far from the level expected from a country having a growing economy and a pivotal role in other important areas at regional and

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international levels. We must proceed with our work. To do so, the government, Colciencias, public and private universities, non-governmental entities, private industry, associations of patients and the group of professionals who work in mental health all have to join forces. It is essential to re-evaluate the logistic and economic support strategies for research in Colombia and to create public policies that guarantee the continuity of resources to carry out longitudinal projects, ones that are aligned with the dimension of the social issues and that have a true impact on the health of the Colombians.

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