



Aristoteleio College Model United Nations

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

“Measures to be taken to combat the increase in mental health issues that affect both adults and children caused by the global pandemic and the quarantine»

STUDY GUIDE

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WELCOMING LETTER

Honorable Delegates,

As Chairs of the WHO committee we are pleased to welcome you to in the 21st ARC MUN! The topic that we have chosen for this year's debates concerns the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had in the global community, specifically any consequences attending to mental health issues worldwide; a significantly important matter of discussion that continues to torment millions of people to this day.

We are truly thrilled to bear witness to your exchange of ideas, experiences and innovative solutions which will affirmatively be both enriching and transforming. Furthermore, we strongly encourage you to embark on this collaborative journey wholeheartedly, as the debates that will ensue on our committee will undoubtedly will be fruitful and rewarding.

As you begin your preparation to become the next ambassador for your assigned country, we propose that you study carefully this guide, as it was made in order to assist you in every step of the way of your research. Further, to give you some insight on our committee's purposes and goals.

Lastly, do not refrain from contacting with us for any kind of question or problem that you may encounter at who.arcmun@mail.com.

Warm regards,

Panagiotis Papakrivos

John Tsampakalos

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations with its overall focus being the international public health as well as battling upcoming global health issues. The World Health Organization was established on April 7, 1948. This specialized agency is a part of the United Nations and was formed with the aim of promoting international public health. Its creation followed the First World Health Assembly, held in 1948, where the WHO Constitution was adopted, signifying the official establishment of the organization. WHO leads global efforts to expand universal health coverage, while also directing and coordinating the world's response to health emergencies, connecting nations, partners and people to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable – so everyone, everywhere can attain the highest level of health.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

The recent public health crisis due to Covid-19 has been one of the greater challenges of our time. This year's ARC MUN WHO committee decided, in light of this health crisis, to highlight the numerous challenges it has brought, emphasizing the importance of public health, science, and international cooperation. Simultaneously, it placed on the agenda of its discussions the urgency of international cooperation to respond to a common threat, all while utilizing and implementing scientific and public health friendly practices. Furthermore, it will examine prospects for the future and how the global community can better prepare for similar challenges it might face in the distant or relative future. A key objective is to draw conclusions regarding the mental health of adolescents and adults due to Covid-19, as well as to how these issues can be mitigated.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- **Loneliness and Social Isolation:** Loneliness and social isolation frequently co-occur and are all too common in elder adults. While the term loneliness refers to subjective feelings, social isolation is defined by the level and frequency of one's social interactions. Loneliness is the subjective sensation of being alone, whereas social isolation refers to the objective state of a person's social surroundings and how they interact with others. Studies suggest that while loneliness and social isolation are not equal to each other, both can exert a detrimental effect on health through shared and different pathways.
- **Telemedicine for mental health:** The World Health Organization has defined telemedicine as the delivery of health care services at a distance using electronic implies for "the diagnosis of treatment, and prevention of disease and injuries, research and evaluation, education of health care providers" to improve well-being. Even though, telephone and video technology as a form of teletherapy was already utilized from the early 90's, the global pandemic led to a surge in demand of medical care (both for physical and phycological cases) that couldn't be satisfied in person.
- **Pandemic-related stress and post-traumatic stress disorder:** Referring to pandemic related stress, we indicate the brunt of phycological trauma that one may have gone under during the period of the pandemic due to several grounds (Health concerns, isolation, financial strain, uncertainty in work and education environments, grief and loss, media overload etc.).According to WHO in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by a massive 25%. While also noting that young people were one of the age groups that were affected the most, being disproportionally at risk of exhibiting isolating, self-harming and even suicidal behavior.
- **Public Health Interventions:** A public health intervention is an organized effort to promote those specific behaviors and habits that can improve physical, mental and emotional health. These interventions can also reframe the perspective of unhealthy habits to change the way people think about those behaviors. Public health interventions play an important role in

the overall health, longevity and productivity of a community, as they can improve quality of life, reduce human suffering, help children thrive, and save money. The people and programs involved in public health work to create the healthiest nation possible.

ACTIONS ALREADY TAKEN

Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030 (WHO)

The Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly, consisting of Ministers of Health of 194 Member States, adopted the WHO's Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020 in May 2013. In 2019, the action plan was extended until 2030 by the Seventy-second World Health Assembly. Then in 2021, the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly endorsed updates to the action plan, including updates to the plan's options for implementation and indicators.

Although enriched with new and updated indicators and implementation options, the original four major objectives of the Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030 remain unchanged: more effective leadership and governance for mental health; the provision of comprehensive, integrated mental health and social care services in community-based settings; implementation of strategies for promotion and prevention; and strengthened information systems, evidence and research (1). The mental health action plan was a product of a consultation process that involved 135 countries, 60 WHO collaborating centres and academic centres, 76 nongovernmental organizations, and 17 other organizations and individual experts (2).

EU's approach to mental health

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 6 people in the EU suffered from mental health issues. This situation has worsened with the unprecedented crises experienced over the past years. The pandemic has placed additional pressures on people's mental health, especially among the young and those with pre-existing mental health conditions (1). In 2021 the EU's "Joint Action ImpleMENTAL" brought together a total of 21 Member States for the implementation of the Third Health Programme's Annual Work Plan (2020), supported by a financial contribution of EUR 5.4 million. The WHO Regional Office for Europe supported the "Joint Action ImpleMENTAL's" efforts regarding training and capacity building, via a contribution agreement with a value of €1 million under the EU4Health 2022 work programme.

In her 2022 State of the Union speech, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the Commission's intention to present "a new initiative on mental health" in 2023. On 7 June 2023, the Commission adopted the "Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health", which will help Member States and stakeholders to take swift action to deal with mental health challenges. The Communication's 20 flagships –identifying financing opportunities worth EUR 1.23 billion– will support directly and indirectly Member States in achieving a comprehensive approach to mental health (2).

Mental Health and COVID- 19 World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH)

On 21 April 2020 the World Federation for Mental Health recommended some essential actions in line with their values and principles. Some priorities are listed emerging from the debates, discussions and best practice interventions at national and international levels on which significant consensus and agreement had been reached, namely to:

1. Adopt a "Whole of Society approach", that involves and coordinates all existing components and resources for mental health and psychosocial support systems, mapping, providing guidance and basic training;

2. Provide guidance on mental health and psychosocial support for health workers, managers of health facilities, caregivers looking after children, older adults, people in isolation and members of the public more generally;
3. Engage communities: help the general population to cope with distress, anxiety, uncertainty, sadness and grief caused by the pandemic; balance and integrate professional interventions with community involvement in terms of solidarity and caring actions; enhancing the general sense of belonging to a community;
4. Provide people with mental health needs with the same quality of information regarding COVID-19 awareness and prevention given to all citizens, wherever they are, at home or in an institution. They have the same need for information and would require additional support should they be infected;
5. Strengthen Primary Care roles to safeguard and guarantee health prevention, healthcare responses with the best possible care pathways, including mental health;
6. Ensure psychiatric care and psychosocial support for people with severe mental illness who are at risk of neglect as well as infection;
7. Strengthen community-based interventions, through many forms of home support and care, with a multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral approach, alongside the highest level of caution and protection of both mental health user and staff;
8. Pool resources available for mental health support and overcome fragmentation, foster inter-sectoral referral pathways in public mental health care and the social services third-sector alliance, for a comprehensive response to the needs of care and assistance;
9. Involve stakeholder organizations, especially those related to people with lived experience and carers, in gathering emerging needs, in defining essential services and actions, and in all steps of coordination and decision-making process;
10. Protect people with severe mental illness living in institutions, hospitals, prisons, shelters, nursing homes, group homes and other special facilities ensuring overall care and prevention of COVID-19 infections, while avoiding human rights violations; create alternative lockdown accommodation if facilities are full;
11. Organize humanitarian aid and response to basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, medication) for all people affected and living in poverty and, in particular, persons with mental illness who are homeless, unemployed and socially deprived of these basic needs;

12. Support the volunteer sector, non-profit organizations, social enterprises and cooperatives that are suffering particularly from the closure of their programmes and services, through direct economic interventions and special projects;
13. Support families who alone cannot act as social safety nets for the emergency except for very short periods, in the absence of other supports, and actively monitor daily life conditions to prevent domestic violence on women, children and disabled family members;
14. Build a system of services via Internet or telephone to reach out to people, communicate and interact with them to retain contact, as suggested in e-mental health experiences; access to teletherapy for outpatients already engaged in care to avoid loss of continuity and follow-up and prevent relapses;
15. Create a network of local aid programmes for first contact, active listening and support, as offered by diverse entities, volunteers or even private specialists, by coherently organizing them through the establishment of national toll-free numbers.

POINTS TO BE ADDRESSED

1. Undoubtedly the global pandemic has affected the mental health of each and every one of us at various degrees. However which age group do you think has been affected the most?
2. Can the mental trauma of the absence of contact with their peers cause difficulties in socializing during their adolescence and adult life for preschool and primary school students?
3. It has been 2 years since the last lockdown of the pandemic and, while most people go about their daily lives as normal, a lot of people do not seem to have fully recovered psychologically. What could this phenomenon be caused by and what can be done to combat it?
4. Despite the widespread use of online communication programs (zoom, webex), the continuation of courses and the establishment of teleworking, has this substitute of social contact been sufficient to cover the need for socialization that humans require? Additionally if there were no such means of communication, would the situation remain unchanged or change for the worse ?

5. How can society (mainly non-experts) on an individual level contribute to helping those riddle by loneliness during the pandemic, for example elder people who live alone, reconnect with their social circle?
6. What kind of methods or measures does your country propose to be applied , in the long or short run, to mitigate or even better to combat the mental illnesses that young and elder people suffer from in the post-covid years as a result of the past lockdown periods?

Useful Videos

1)"European Mental Health Week: A Message from Stella Kyriakides, EU Commissioner for Health"

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAoWQUU2ulk>] (Mental Health Europe)

2)"I had a black dog, his name was depression"

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiCrniLQGYc&t=171s>] (WHO)

3)"Mental Health as part of the EU Global Health Strategy"

[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NOnU7N7L4c>](EU)

4)"Mental health is as important as physical health" - WHO

Chief[<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogvbNLLL4WQ>] (WHO)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is true and evident that the protection and promotion of global health are some of the most important goals that humanity has set and demands the cooperation of each and every one of the member states of the United Nations. However, especially after a burden like the COVID-19 epidemic, it is apparent now more than ever, that mental illnesses are in most cases sadly overlooked and ignored because they are thought to be less "important". As a result, solutions to mental problems are wrongly protracted. The situation calls for an immediate and highly effective interference of organizations of such caliber as the UN to invest, more than ever before, to a truly burning issue, in order to ensure world's mental wellbeing.

“There is no health without mental health.” -United States Surgeon General Dr. David Satche

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