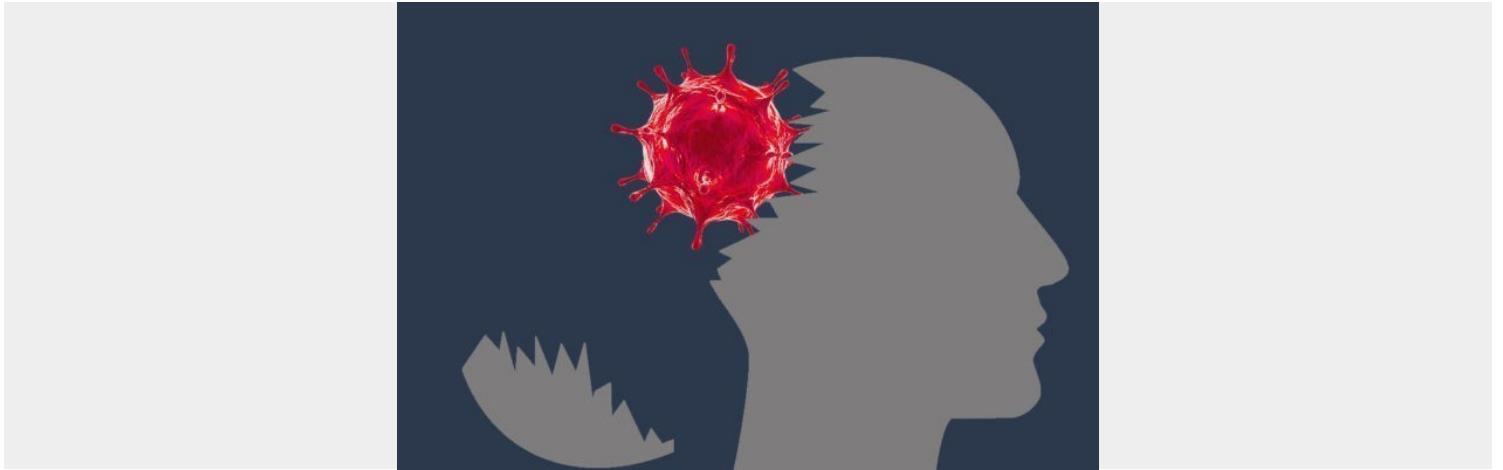


AFTER-EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON MENTAL HEALTH IN THE UNITED STATES

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The COVID-19 pandemic is leaving an immeasurable impact on various issues throughout the United States. One of the more pressing issues that is being greatly impacted is mental health. The effects of the pandemic on mental health in the US are severe and will likely have a lasting impact in the realm of public mental health. Factors related to the pandemic such as social isolation, loss of kin, unemployment, lack of school structure and frontline work are all contributing to this massive crisis. And they are disproportionately affecting communities that are already vulnerable. Mental health was a pressing issue before COVID hit, but the pandemic has taken these factors and made them increasingly worse. Since mental health is a historically overlooked matter when it comes to public health policy in the US, it is absolutely essential that the issue is brought up when discussing how to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. People are suffering, and they will continue to suffer unless policy slated towards improving mental health infrastructure is implemented.

A recent survey found that 41.1% of adults (18+) in the US in January 2021 were experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression. This figure has risen exponentially from January to June 2019, where only 11% of adults reported symptoms. Of this reporting, young adults aged 18 to 24, essential workers, communities of color, parents and children as well as the unemployed are the most affected as they are most vulnerable to developing mental health problems due to the pandemic.

The causes of the vulnerability in these groups includes loss of income, loss of in-person schooling, lack of social exposure, lack of childcare, lack of access to quality healthcare and an increased risk/fear of contracting coronavirus. All of these factors contribute majorly to the development or worsening of anxiety and depression as well as substance use and suicidal thoughts.

Since the pandemic has placed immense pressure on America's already overwhelmed health systems, many people have likely experienced a lack of access to quality healthcare due to loss in the size of the workforce and an increase in those needing care. In turn, those suffering from mental health problems are less likely to receive the support they need. To combat this, the US must invest in telemedicine programs and remote mental health support. Whether it be through helplines or online chats, these options must be freely available to the public and must be culturally and linguistically adapted for the communities they are trying to reach. In addition, there is a pressing need for improved access to healthcare and treatment options. Those most vulnerable to mental health crisis's during this pandemic are those who historically lack access to quality care and treatment programs. These communities deserve better access, and the government should provide for it, especially during a pandemic where people have lost everything.

The effects of the pandemic are wide ranging, and people are suffering in all sorts of ways because of it. The Trump administration has notably failed to support its people through a multitude of ways. Many of the pressures that people are facing that subsequently make them vulnerable to mental health issues could be solved through government safety nets. Though it has been over a year, The American government has provided the bare minimum in support and many have been left behind. US leaders should immediately provide basic necessities like food, housing, money and healthcare to all that need it. For if they do, the country might see the effects of the pandemic on mental health mitigated.

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