Doctors save lives, psychologists save existences:

mental health 5G? The role of research and teaching in the current university paradigm

SOARES, Luísa [1]

(1)　　 0000-0002-5373-1320; University of Madeira. Funchal, Portugal. lsoares@staff.uma.pt

O conteúdo expresso neste artigo é de inteira responsabilidade dos/as seus/as autores/as.

A B S T R A C T

Scientific events are important for maturing and debate about science and as such, it is suggested a reflection on a paradigm shift that seems to be taking place: mental health is also health vs the previous paradigm called mental health is health. This change occurs, particularly in this post-pandemic context. We are already in the mental health is health paradigm, without which everything else ceases to make sense, or even to exist. Hence the title of this reflective paper: Doctors save lives; psychologists save existences: mental health 5g? I order to reflect on the urgency and speed (such as 5G internet) to implement behavioral changes in mental health, this work was presented in a keynote session at the 14th National Congress of Health Psychology (which occurred on 8th-10th of September 2022). Here I intend to reflect and raise some questions rather than answer them.

R E S U M O

Os acontecimentos científicos são importantes para o amadurecimento e debate sobre a ciência e como tal, sugere-se uma reflexão sobre uma mudança de paradigma que parece estar em curso: saúde mental também é saúde versus o paradigma anterior denominado saúde mental é saúde. Esta mudança ocorre, particularmente neste contexto pós-pandemia. Já estamos no paradigma saúde mental é saúde, sem o qual tudo o resto deixa de fazer sentido, ou mesmo de existir. Daí o título deste artigo reflexivo: Médicos salvam vidas; psicólogos salvam existências: saúde mental 5g? Com o objetivo de refletir sobre a urgência e rapidez (como a internet 5G) para implementar mudanças comportamentais na saúde mental, este trabalho foi apresentado em keynote session no 14º Congresso Nacional de Psicologia da Saúde (que ocorreu de 8 a 10 de setembro de 2022). Aqui pretendo refletir e levantar algumas questões em vez de respondê-las.

Introduction

The National Health Plan for Portugal (*Direcção Geral de Saúde - DGS*, General Health Board, 2021-2030) defines as one of the priority goals for mental health to reverse the trend of prescribing benzodiazepines in the population. The USA is the country that most prescribes benzodiazepines, followed by Europe, where Portugal is one of the countries that most prescribes them (WHO, 2020). Human beings seem to feel lost on their own planet, hence the high levels of depression and anxiety. People seem to feel more lost between the real world and the virtual world: when people feel distressed, lost and helpless, they tend to get depressed. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) 15 to 16% of the world's population suffers from depression.

It is very complicated for the human being with mental fragilities to live in a time of rapid changes. In medicine, if it is true that technology, more precisely clinical exams, allow a more accurate diagnosis, it is also true that today we are moving from a medicine centered on the patient and his clinical history to a medicine centered on technology. And that can lead to dehumanization. There are doctors who do not look up from the computer, during an appointment to meet the patient's gaze. Patients are treated very well technically, but a holistic perspective is needed in the process. Technology is here to stay, it is undeniable and we need to take advantage from its benefits. In the other hand we need to guarantee the humanism associated with medicine, the ability to empathize with the patient and, for this to occur, it is necessary to invest (even more) in the doctor/patient relationship. One must learn the art of conversation and that's where Psychology comes in: talking, understanding, listening to the other person is not easy and it's very important.

Carl Rogers (1961) has highlighted the importance of making the other person feel attended to, welcomed before attempting any intervention. Sigmund Freud (1961) spoke of the salutary effect of mere clinical listening. Skinner (1978) spoke of the "non-punitive audience", that is, listening to the other carefully, without judging him, eliminates tensions.

It is important not to rush into analyzing and issuing "diagnoses". Often what the other wants least is to be analyzed, classified, diagnosed. Just wants to be heard, understood and recognized as a person with value. In short, a good listener shows interest in the other, this, in itself is already rewarding. So, a psychologist needs to know how to speak and know how to listen. These are not easy tasks to be performed with full effectiveness. Most people find it difficult to talk about themselves and even more difficult to know how to listen. It sounds simple, but it's not. One needs to be very cautious not to harm the other person. Listening in a

porous, curious way, thinking about what you are hearing, activates several cognitive processes. Talking and listening is not a duel between two persons.

"Each one of us is an enigma, which most of the time remains to be deciphered" (Miguel Torga, 1996)

5G mental health?

Following these ideas, I would like to provoke some critical thinking concerning mental health and the use of technology these days. When I refer to 5G mental health, I would like to remind that the psychologist is a professional in the human sciences who fits into the health area and we cannot have humanization without health, nor health without humanization. Interestingly, the training course in Psychology at the University of Madeira, in Portugal fits into the best possible faculty: Faculty of Arts and Humanities. Psychology is indeed an art, the art of talking WITH and ABOUT humanity, with the existence and essence of the human being.

We are facing a world in transformation where the inversion of human values prevails; there is a progressive loss of authority of parents and teachers as role models for the "human being" due to, perhaps the predominance of the influence of the internet and also the failure of the systematic and traditional education, where co-exists the parental fear of educating with 3 fundamental ingredients: limits, discipline and affection. Parents seem to want to be friends with their children and not raising human beings, leading and guiding their children towards a life project, with an educational style with authority and democracy.

I would like to emphasize this idea of Jung (1971) that "*There is no such thing as a pure introvert or extrovert, but a continuum where each one of us is situated*". This idea is over 100 years old, but it clearly applies to today and to various mental illnesses. We increasingly consider them as a spectrum, a continuum and not an absolute label. Current scientific evidence in mental health also demonstrates this:

- Individual differences in mental health are classified with degrees rather than types;

- More extensive mental health conditions (hospitalization) are also responsible for the tendency for more restricted ones to occur (e.g. depression, anxiety). Conway (2021) proposes an alternative diagnostic system: the Hierarchical Taxonomy of Psychopathology (HiTOP) which describes the broad and specific components of mental disorder and deconstructs traditional diagnostic categories such as those listed in the DSM and reformulates them in terms of profiles and dimensions. It is closer to human reality and understanding the different

1725

shades that human behavior can have. In fact, the human being does not have just one tonality. It is made up of balances of various shades in terms of behavior and mental health.

How nice it is when someone offers one of the most precious possessions they have, THEIR TIME, to reach the other, capturing the subtleties of their essence and comforting them in the most difficult moments. This is the art of Psychology. And, in a future that is predicted to be clearly dominated by Artificial Intelligence, human competence can be gold!

I would now like to take the opportunity to reflect a little on a book by a Brazilian doctor called "Patients who cure: the daily life of a doctor in the Unified Health System – SUS", by Júlia Rocha (2020). It is a book that describes the internal psychological growth of this doctor as she carries out her work helping patients. She tells some clinical stories and how she learned from each patient. Reading this book makes me point out that it takes a doctor/therapist to be very open and receptive to understand and to be transformed internally with each patient. Become not only more technically efficient, but also emotionally intelligent. According to the author, health goes beyond being a doctor, the hospital, and the office. Health is social well-being, it means working with dignity, having access to comfortable and accessible public transportation, having security, having a good school for your children, having peace of mind. She also refers to a notion from one of her professors, that no one makes a bond with a doctor who does not solve a problem: interest, curiosity in knowing the patient but also scientific knowledge is necessary.

Apps for Mental Health

Our ability to OBSERVE something and DESCRIBE with precision and originality is very human and stimulates our brain activity. Technology cannot do that. Now, let us reflect on the excessive manufactures of technological applications for mental health, in a completely uncontrolled way, not evaluated, not tested or ecologically validated. In Silicon Valley, about 10,000 mental health apps were created during the pandemic period of 2020-2022. Also, consider how the capitalist technology is saturating the market with unrealistic services to promote mental health. Questions we urgently need to ask as a society:

• How is technology being used by people and mental health services?

• What are examples of good practice?

• What have we learned so far, the year 2023 and 2024?

• What does the research tell us?

• What national and international guidelines and policies exist based on empirical and scientific evidence?

• How to expand the population's access to the benefits generated by scientific and technological knowledge?

There are some good free examples of apps for mental health, which are very interesting and based on theoretical models of Psychology, but do not present scientific and proven results about their effectiveness, like Finch, MindShift CBT, Insight Timer and Virtual Hope Box, just to mention a few.

Now, consider a slightly more global, or more European vision, about the future. It is called the "new European Bauhaus" initiative. It is an idea promoted by the European community and links the European ecological pact to our living spaces. Invites all Europeans to imagine and build together a future that is not only sustainable and inclusive, but also visually and mentally beautiful. It is a creative and interdisciplinary movement in development and in which everyone can participate. It translates into a platform for experimentation and creation of connections, which promotes collaboration between thinkers and entrepreneurs interested in creating future ways of life together; it is a bridge between the world of science and technology and the world of art and culture; and it is also an invitation to change perspectives and face ecological and digital challenges as opportunities to transform our lives for the better. Basically, it aims to find innovative solutions to complex social problems through co-creation between different scientific areas.

Technology applied to mental health with common sense is a genius idea! For example, it allows:

• Working less and having more time available for leisure, reducing physical distances between people;

• Telepsychology could be a natural evolution of mental health care in the digital world. The ability to improve the quality, equity and accessibility of mental health care is indisputable;

• Allows real-time assistance to patients;

• Reduction of material costs;

• Decrease overcrowding in health facilities;

• Enable world-class data security for healthcare professionals and patients;

• Continuity of care in any situation, but it is necessary to build safe and scientifically tested platforms, exclusively for psychological care. Research and scientists can help a lot here. There are 3 interesting concepts about technology applied to mental health with common sense that are worth exploring, which arise from the work of interdisciplinary teams with psychologists, designers, engineers, doctors: the concepts of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Health 4.0 and IoT (the Internet of Things).

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

It is the field of science that develops intelligence in software mechanisms and robots, it is similar to human intelligence. A famous example of AI in healthcare is the IBM Watson supercomputer, which can analyze thousands of contents in just a few seconds, which helps a lot in solving clinical cases. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, a study by Gaurav, Andrea, and Nick Santhanam (2018) AI will change the interaction between doctors and patients in various situations, like the routine activities such as monitoring patient vital signs will no longer be the responsibility of health professionals, the benefits of greater productivity of professionals will increase and also better agility skills on digital technologies will be required in the future.

Health 4.0

The concept of Health 4.0 is to use investments in technology, in the health area, to promote disease prevention and guarantee the physical and mental well-being of patients. It involves the integration in medicine of technological tools and automated mechanisms such as the management systems of medical offices, as well as getting care as close as possible to that of the human being. Many doctors and psychologists already use blogs and websites as a way to share information and educate their patients. In fact, presenting correct information in the midst of so much false data and fake news on the Internet can be a good way to do a good public and private service to the public.

IoT (Internet of Things)

The IoT, Internet Of Things is the idea of integrating the real world with the digital world. It is the integration of everyday objects with computing and the Internet. In the area of health and well-being, we have the example of watches that are able to measure heart rate and help change behaviors for a better health.

I would like to challenge the reader again to make and maintain a critical thinking/look on the following questions:

- What is the role of research and teaching in the current university paradigm?

- Universities exclusively for teaching vs Universities as factories for producing scientific articles with an impact factor?

- What content is useful for professionals daily practice?

Of course, we have already asked ourselves these questions, in particular people who work in the university world, researchers or professors. What useful content are we producing that is actually informative and beneficial for professionals daily practice? I leave you to think about it knowing that:

We all choose a profession, but

Our first vocation is to be

"Human being".

That implies having a critical thinking in the face of the problems that surround us. Stop and think for a while and create a context conducive to serenity and common sense to continue building a path of SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY for Health Psychology, in particular for Mental Health, seems necessary. With urgency and speed, as the 5G Internet will do, but with serenity and common sense. So I remind you here of the definition of these two simple concepts from the dictionary.

Serenity: means calm or peaceful, not anticipating problems, being in the here and now.

Having serenity is expressing softness in actions, even in the face of adverse situations and conflicts. It is associated with the ability to deal with situations and with other people, docilely and without influencing one's own emotional state. Being serene provides better conditions to act in the world.

Common sense: balance in decisions or judgments in each situation that presents itself; way of acting based on reason and balance, according to the standards and morals of a common good.

May they be guiding standards for this new scientific, academic and professional path that we are all building: for students who are starting their training, for psychologists who are already in the field helping people in mental suffering and for the teachers in charge of training the new generations of psychologists. Training in Psychology and in other disciplinary areas does not benefit the common good if it becomes a machine for producing articles with an impact factor. Let us aspire for serenity and common sense in this scientific foundation. We are at the end of an era, the end of the pandemic, even the death of the Queen of England helps to delineate this historic era in which we live in 2023. May these two human barometers (serenity and common sense) help us to create a new historical epoch in which speed and urgency prevails in everything, but that does not invalidate the growth of mental health with common sense and serenity.

REFERENCES

Conway, C. C., Forbes, M. K., & South, S. C. (2022). A Hierarchical Taxonomy of Psychopathology (HiTOP) Primer for Mental Health Researchers. Clinical Psychological Science, 10(2), 236–258. https://doi.org/10.1177/21677026211017834

Freud, S. (1961). The resistances to psycho-analysis. *In The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX* (1923-1925): The Ego and the Id and other works (211-224).

Jung, C. G. (1971). *Psychological Types*. London: Routledge. ISBN 978-0-415-04559-9.

Gaurav B., Andrea Q. & Nick S. (2018, January 8th). *Artificial intelligence will soon change how we conduct our daily lives. Are companies prepared to capture value from the oncoming wave of innovation?* McKinsey Global Institute study retrieved on 21st October from https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/advanced-electronics/our-insights/artificial-intelligence-the-time-to-act-is-now

New European Bauhaus (2022). Retrieved on 21st October from https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en

Plano Nacional de Saúde (2021- 2030). Direcção Geral de Saúde (DGS). Retrieved on 21st October 2022 from https://pns.dgs.pt

Rogers, C. (1961). *Tornar - se Pessoa*. Martins Fontes.

Rocha, J. (2020). *Pacientes que curam*. Civilização Brasileira. ISBN 9786558020158

Skinner, B. F. (1978). *Reflections on Behaviorism and Society*. ISBN 0-13-770057-1

Torga, M. (1996). *Contos da Montanha*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira. ISBN 85-209-0720-2.

World Health Organization (2020). *WHO recommends 8 harmful New Psychoactive Substances be placed under international control by the CND*, Retrieved on 21st October 2022 from https://www.who.int/news/item/07-12-2020-recommendations-made-by-the-43rd-who-expert-committee-on-drug-dependence