



Carta al Director

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF PREEXISTING MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Dear Editor-in-Chief,

The closure of all educational institutions, as well as various facilities for sports and recreation, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the adoption of social movement restrictions have impaired the possibility of maintaining healthy living habits in the student population (2). The COVID-19 pandemic has substantially changed our daily lives, career trajectories, and sense of safety, causing a differential impact on mental and physical health (4). Current research posits that younger adults without persisting health conditions may be at reduced risk for complications of the COVID-19 infection (1). Thus, it is imperative to identify those young adults who are at increased risk for mental health difficulties in order to develop targeted interventions to mitigate emotional distress (3). This letter aims to investigate the psychological impact of preexisting mental and physical health. The sample of respondents were female students ($n = 357$; 22.84 ± 5.69 years of age) students at the University of Belgrade. The survey questions were completed using a Google Forms questionnaire, which was posted on the websites of all organizational units of the University of Belgrade during the period from May 5, 2020 to May 24, 2020. The results obtained were automatically exported to a Google spreadsheet. The response analysis was performed using Office programs such as Excel, and the SPSS 21 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) package in relation to the relevant percentage values of the frequencies for the responses obtained. The results indicate that the level

of regular and planned physical exercise of sports-active female students decreased by 38.9 % during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the level of their physical condition decreased by 34.3 %. When asked if they were worried about their health, which could be affected by the COVID-19 viral infection, 73.6 % answered that they were indeed worried about their health. This primarily refers to maintaining their healthy physical condition, which is also related to their mental health, as well as to preventing the possible occurrence of undesirable health conditions. Such different approaches may apply to all future pandemic conditions or similar life-threatening conditions. With the incidence and prevention of COVID-19, both health and social aspects need to be re-examined and redefined.

Marina Vukotic¹, Dragan Krivokapic¹, Marija Bubanja¹,
Miodrag Zarubica², and Srdjan Redzepagic³

¹Faculty for Sport and Physical Education. Univerzitet Crne Gore. Podgorica, Montenegro. ²IT Center. Univerzitet Crne Gore. Podgorica, Montenegro. ³GREDEG. Université Côte d'Azur. Nice, France

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