

COVID-19 AND SOCIAL DISTANCE: IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES IN THE MENTAL HEALTH OF THE ELDERLY

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Abstract: The aim of this review is to analyze the impact of social distancing on the occupational roles of the elderly, as well as new approaches to health promotion. Methodologically, we selected articles on social isolation, loneliness, changes in mood and cognition, before and during the current pandemic. Sites used: PubMed, The Lancet, Cochrane Library and Google Scholar. Thus, we are in a historic and challenging moment in the face of the problems generated by COVID-19. Social distancing, adopted around the world and proven to be important for the containment of the pandemic, is a public health risk still underestimated, which has brought impacts and challenges for the elderly. Loneliness is defined by individuals' level of satisfaction with interpersonal relationships or by the perception of isolation, which, when installed, are related to depression, anxiety and cognitive decline, in addition to reducing resilience factors. Isolation increases the risk of developing dementia by 50% and stroke by 32%. The sudden way in which it occurred reduced and delayed the capacity for adaptive responses, aggravating psychosocial risk, financial impact, organic health and functional loss. The loss of social support and occupational functions of the elderly expose their weaknesses, making it imperative that measures to cushion loneliness are targets of interventions that protect well-being. One of these resources is technology, proving to be essential in social interactions and health care. We conclude that, given the difficulties and plurality of the elderly, we must develop methods to recognize early injuries related to distancing, in addition to promoting research and health promotion actions, involving family members, the community and health professionals.

Keywords: Social isolation, COVID-19, older adults, mental health.

Descriptors: social isolation, COVID-19, elderly and mental health.