

The pandemic of the new coronavirus and the increase in hospital admissions due to psychoactive substance use in Brazil

Summary

The spread of SARS-CoV-2 and its complications in the global context induced measures to control the Covid-19 pandemic and, on 03/23/2020, the World Health Organization recommended social isolation. In addition to fear and uncertainty, the abrupt change in lifestyle habits and changes in the sleep-wake cycle favor the emergence of psychoactive substance use disorders. These substances act on the mesocorticolimbic pathway and influence the reward system, which has the function of increasing the propensity to repeat an activity, increasingly conditioning the use as a form of escape from psychological suffering. In this context, the present study sought to analyze the number of hospitalizations resulting from the use of psychoactive substances in Brazil during the pandemic period.

Volume 13 Issue 3 - 2023

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Received: May 01, 2023 | **Published:** May 17, 2023

Introduction

The spread of SARS-CoV-2 and its complications in the global context induced measures to control the Covid-19 pandemic and, on 03/23/2020, the World Health Organization recommended social isolation. In addition to fear and uncertainty, the abrupt change in lifestyle habits and changes in the sleep-wake cycle favor the emergence of psychoactive substance use disorders. These substances act on the mesocorticolimbic pathway and influence the reward system, which has the function of increasing the propensity to repeat an activity, increasingly conditioning its use as a form of escape from psychological suffering.

Objective

To analyze the number of hospital admissions for psychoactive substances during the COVID-19 pandemic and compare with two previous years.

Methods

This is a retrospective, cross-sectional study of patients hospitalized for psychoactive substance use from March 2020 to January 2022. For further substantiation, these findings were compared with those of the years 2018 and 2019. The data were obtained by means of the Health Information - TABNET, from the Department of Information Technology of the Unified Health System - DATASUS. In addition, a literature review was conducted in the SciELO, LILACS, and PubMed databases. The terms used in the search were psychoactive substances and/or covid 19 and/or Brazil.¹⁻⁴

Result

At the time of the pandemic 66,194 cases of hospitalizations for use of psychoactive substances were identified. The South region had the highest number of hospitalizations, with 30,058 cases, followed by the Southeast region with 22,449. The North and Central-West regions had the lowest rates, with 986 and 3,794, respectively. The Northeast region was the third largest region with prevalence of hospitalizations, with 8,907 cases. In 2019, when comparing to the pandemic, the total number of cases was lower by 35.62%, with 42,617 cases in total. In addition, the South region, with 18,429, had the highest prevalence. Furthermore, comparing the year 2018 with

the pandemic, the number of hospitalizations was 33.35% lower, with a prevalence of 44,114 this year. The South region remained with the highest rate, with 20,122 cases. In both 2019 and 2018, the region with the lowest prevalence was the North, with 696 and 944 cases, respectively. Both lower values when compared to the time of the pandemic.⁵⁻⁸

Conclusion

An increase in the number of hospitalizations for psychoactive drug use in the pandemic period was therefore evidenced.

Acknowledgments

None.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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