



The pain of every day: student health before and during the Covid-19 pandemic

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For 4 years, our team has been monitoring the physical and mental complaints of Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB) students, mainly those from the healthcare field. We have verified oscillations in headache complaints and other psycho-emotional symptoms during this period. In 2022, perhaps as a result of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, complaints of headache and anxiety were above 70%. This public, today, demands integral care appropriate to their socio-cultural reality. We warn about the importance of local diagnosis and respective offer of appropriate social support to each reality to foster, care and accompany these communities.

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Covid-19 has made, is making and will make biopsychosocial crossings and interweaving with significant changes in the daily life and also the physical and mental health of the world's population. The virus invaded physical and mental spaces and had repercussions on the individual and collective being and performance of people and institutions. So, as a result, new challenges in the teaching-learning process without a holistic view of those involved in the process emerged in the universities. Rather, the university was considered a plural space where a (re)adjustment of the entrants to the new challenges was necessary. During the pandemic, this environment was replaced, and new teaching-learning strategies and adaptations were required.¹ Not surprisingly, in these transitional scenarios, added to the individual reality of the students, the unpleasant physical and mental reactions triggered or exacerbated in the pandemic period.

Our team monitored the health conditions of the students of the UFPB and verified the prevalence of self-reported psycho-emotional and neurological disorders before² and during the COVID-19^{3,4} pandemic to obtain a diagnosis of the local reality. This is a serial cross-sectional survey with data collection in the same population at different times. The research is part of the project "Students' Health Status: perception, self-report and clinical trial with integrative and complementary health practices" approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the CCS/UFPB (protocol No. 2,784,383; CAAE 92087118.6.0000.5188). All volunteers received information regarding the objectives of the research and signed a Free and Informed Consent Form. The collection instrument was designed on Google Forms and recruitment of active students aged ≥ 18 years was via Instagram®, e-mail and WhatsApp®.

Over the years 2018-2022, 1,097 students participated in the surveys. The students were mostly young, single and female. It was observed, in the serial data, an increase in pain complaints, mainly headache, migraine, anxiety, insomnia, tinnitus and bruxism among the participants (Table 1). In four years, the prevalence of headache and anxiety complaints exceeded 70%. Thus, in this sample, the prevalence of headache accompanied the participants' psycho-emotional and psychiatric changes.

Keywords:

Headache
Migraine
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Table 1. Self-report of physical and mental symptoms in students, João Pessoa, Paraíba, Brazil (2018-2022)

Collection period	n	Sex		Hdch*	Mgrn*	Anxiety*	T	C-19	NT
		F	M						
		%	%						
2018-2019	302	79.7	20.2	68.9	36.8	40.7	0.33	-	8.9
June/2020³	56	82.1	17.9	51.8	35.7	76.8	25.0	-	14.3
June/2020	119	81.5	18.5	60.5	29.4	78.2	11.8	0.0	6.7
Jan-Mar/2021⁴	128	87.5	12.6	58.6	28.9	84.4	12.5	10.9	12.5
Jan./2021	279	74.9	25.1	48.4	23.3	78.9	12.2	5.0	8.6
June-July2022	119	72.3	27.7	80.7	44.5	87.4	31.1	26.1	8.4
May-July/2022	94	73.4	26.6	74.5	44.7	85.1	29.8	29.8	10.6

n = sample; Hdch=Headache; Mgrn = Migraine *One-month data recording period; T = Tinnitus; C-19 = Covid-19 diagnosis; NT = has already undergone neurological treatment.

Table 1 shows the prevalence of headache, migraine, anxiety and tinnitus fluctuation over the last four years, with higher figures in 2022. In this synthesis is evidenced dysynchrony between the prevalence of headache complaints and consultations with the neurologist, the qualified professional to diagnose and prescribe the appropriate treatment for this complaint. Headache is a common neurological symptom of Covid-19, but its persistence demands neurologist follow-up.

After the outbreak is over, it is necessary to know the immediate and delayed impacts on the daily life and health of the population. At this point a dialogue between administrators, science, ethics, health and politics is needed to mobilise resources and provide the necessary social support to foster, care for and monitor the individual and collective health of the academic community. On the other hand, to raise awareness, clarify and make professionals available to meet the needs already perceived.

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