

Pan American Journal of Public Health

The importance of publishing scientific evidence

Damián Vázquez, MD

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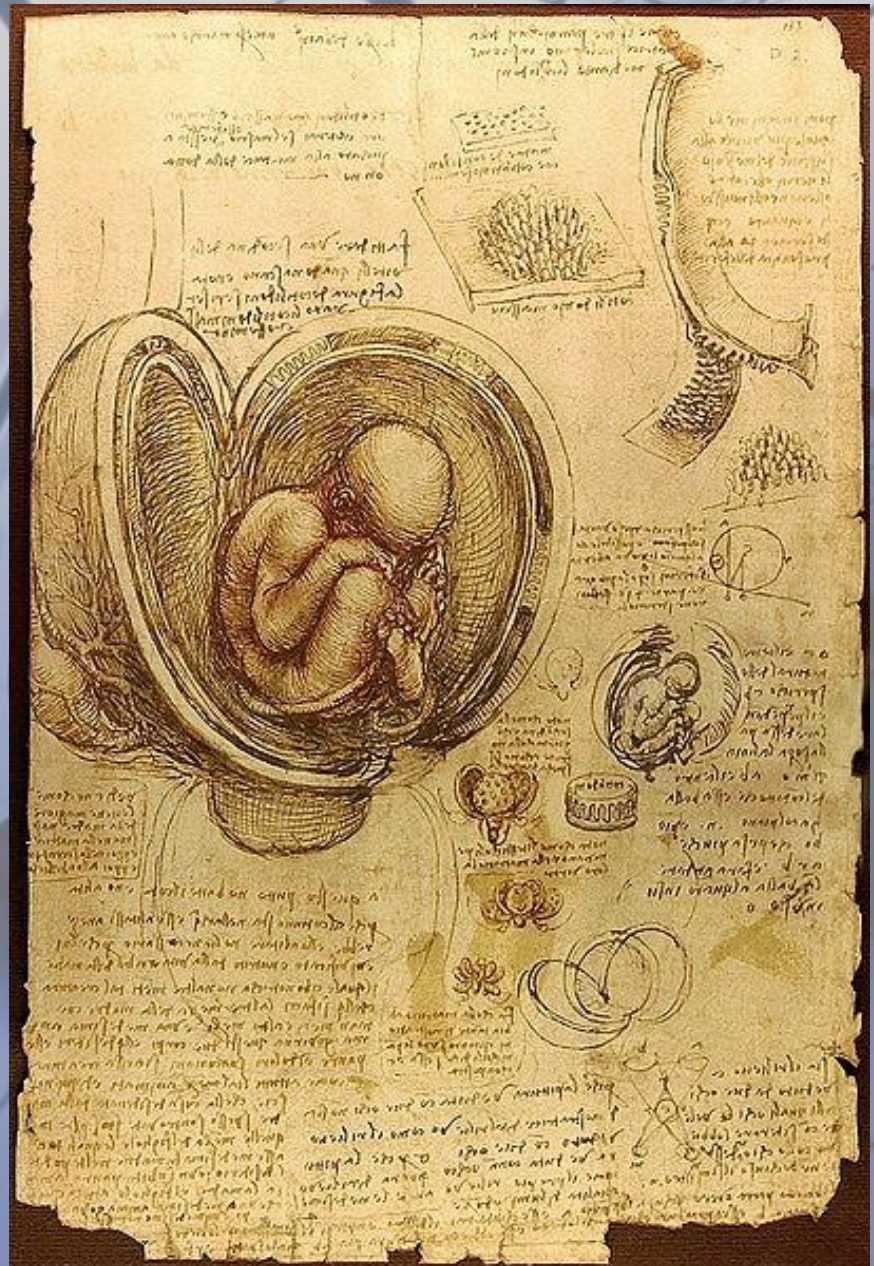
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Ancient Egyptian medicine,
c.1900 B.C.E.

Treatment for migraine

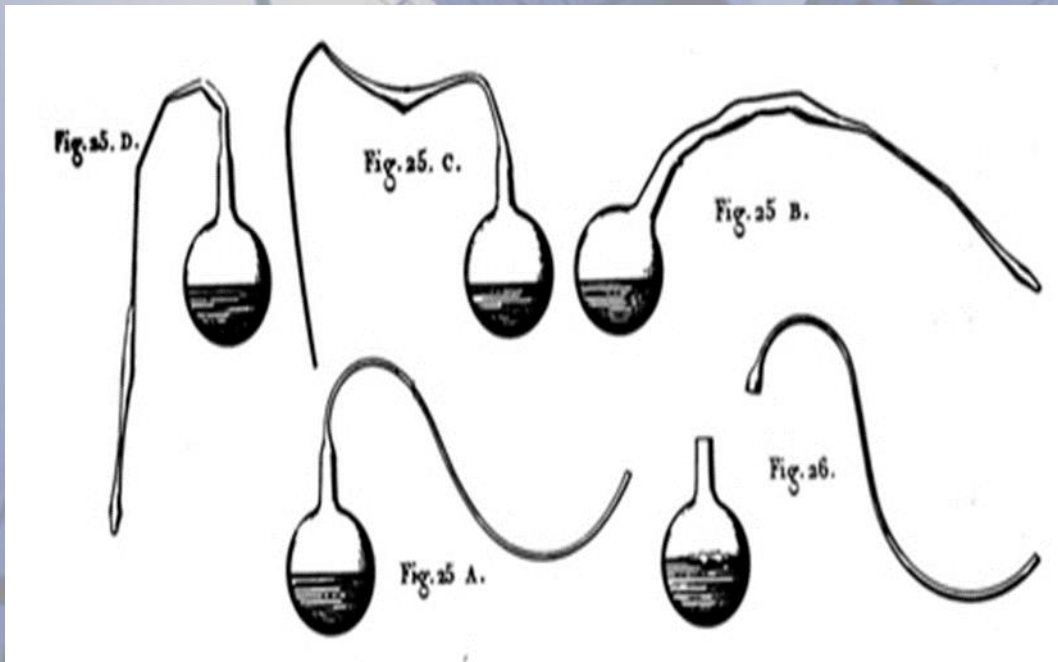
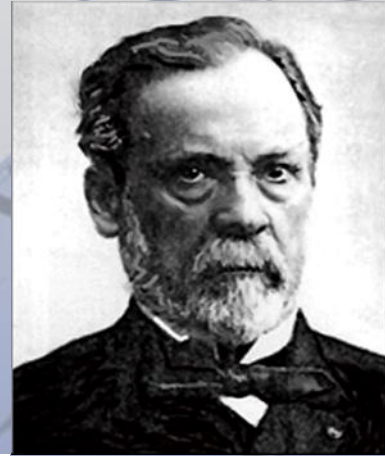


Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1510
Studies of the fetus in the womb



Louis Pasteur, 1822-1895

*Refuted the paradigm of
spontaneous generation*



Kohn et al., 2018

Treatment gap in mental health

Original research



Mental health in the Americas: an overview of the treatment gap

Robert Kohn,¹ Ali Ahsan Ali,² Victor Puac-Polanco,³ Chantal Figueroa,⁴ Victor López-Soto,⁵ Kristen Morgan,⁶ Sandra Saldivia,⁷ and Benjamín Vicente⁷

Suggested citation

Kohn R, Ali A, Puac-Polanco V, Figueroa C, López-Soto V, Morgan K, et al. Mental health in the Americas: an overview of the treatment gap. *Rev Panam Salud Publica*. 2018;42:e165. <https://doi.org/10.26633/RPSP.2018.165>

ABSTRACT

Objective. To understand the mental health treatment gap in the Region of the Americas by examining the prevalence of mental health disorders, use of mental health services, and the global burden of disease.

Methods. Data from community-based surveys of mental disorders in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, and the United States were utilized. The World Mental Health Survey published data were used to estimate the treatment gap. For Canada, Chile, and Guatemala, the treatment gap was calculated from data files. The mean, median and weighted treatment gap, and the 12-month prevalence by severity and category of mental disorder were estimated for the general adult, child-adolescent, and indigenous populations. Disability-adjusted Life Years and Years Lived with Disability were calculated from the Global Burden of Disease study.

Results. Mental and substance use disorders accounted for 10.5% of the global burden of disease in the Americas. The 12-month prevalence rate of severe mental disorders ranged from 2% — 10% across studies. The weighted mean treatment gap in the Americas for moderate to severe disorders was 65.7%; North America, 53.2%; Latin America, 74.7%; Mesoamerica, 78.7%; and South America, 73.1%. The treatment gap for severe mental disorders in children and adolescents was over 50%. One-third of the indigenous population in the United States and 80% in Latin America had not received treatment.

Conclusion. The treatment gap for mental health remains a public health concern. A high proportion of adults, children, and indigenous individuals with serious mental illness remains untreated. The result is an elevated prevalence of mental disorders and global burden of disease.

Keywords

Mental disorders; professional practice gaps; mental health services; Americas.

Disparities in the prevention, care, and rehabilitation of mental disorders in the Americas is a growing public health

problem. Addressing the growing burden of mental disorders requires an understanding of the prevalence, the

associated burden of disease, and the treatment gap for these disorders. The global burden of mental disorders,

- The Region (in particular, decision makers) needs published scientific evidence to inform public health decisions and policies.
- What is not published, does not exist.

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Thematic issue: Economics of NCDs

The global health burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) is large and growing, as this group of diseases already accounts for 70% of total deaths. Global evidence indicates that the high health burden of NCDs translates into significant economic and social costs that threaten to diminish the quality of life of millions of individuals, impoverish families, jeopardize universal health coverage, and increase health disparities within and between countries. Evidence consistently shows that the NCD epidemic cannot be tackled through interventions and policies in the health sector alone. In particular, prevention measures that address NCD risk factors involve a range of sectors including finance, trade, education, agriculture, and transportation. As economics has become the common language among decision makers across sectors, it is imperative that health authorities leverage economic information to more effectively communicate the urgency of tackling NCDs and related risk factors.

This thematic issue of the Pan American Journal of Public Health is part of a continued collaboration between the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and PAHO/WHO to facilitate intragovernmental dialogue for a better understanding of NCD issues by making economic evidence available in the Americas, and to assist countries in integrating economic approaches into their NCD prevention and control policies.

Número temático: Economía de las ENT

La carga mundial de salud de las enfermedades no transmisibles (ENT) es alta y está en aumento, ya que este grupo de enfermedades representa actualmente el 70% del total de las muertes. La evidencia mundial indica que la alta carga de salud de las ENT se traduce en costos económicos y sociales significativos que amenazan con disminuir la calidad de vida de millones de personas, empobrecer a las familias, poner en peligro la cobertura universal de salud y aumentar las disparidades de salud dentro y entre los países. La realidad muestra consistentemente que la epidemia de ENT no puede abordarse mediante intervenciones y políticas solo en el sector de la salud. En particular, las medidas de prevención que abordan los factores de riesgo de ENT involucran una variedad de sectores que incluyen finanzas, comercio, educación, agricultura y transporte. Como la economía se ha convertido en el lenguaje común entre los tomadores de decisiones de todos los sectores, es imperativo que las autoridades de salud aprovechen la información económica para comunicar de manera más efectiva la urgencia de abordar las ENT y los factores de riesgo relacionados.

Este número temático de la Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública es parte de una colaboración continua entre la Agencia de Salud Pública de Canadá (PHAC) y la OPS / OMS para facilitar el diálogo intergubernamental para una mejor comprensión de las enfermedades no transmisibles.

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