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The influence of spirituality on mental health

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Abstract: Introduction: Historically, science and spirituality were considered distinct areas, however, following the expansion of the concept of health by the World Health Organization (WHO), as being “the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being” and not simply the “absence of illness”, the phenomenon of spirituality began to be considered as an influencer on people’s quality of life. Objectives: contextualize mental illness throughout the history of humanity and differentiate the concept of spirituality from religion. Methodology: The methodology adopted for this work is based on bibliographic research of scientific articles and periodicals. Results and discussions: Why study spirituality and religiosity? According to LUKOFF and collaborators “The religious and spiritual dimensions of culture are among the most important factors that structure human beliefs, values, behaviors and patterns of illness, that is, the experience. More and more research suggests that religiosity and spirituality are important factors for people who suffer or are ill. Final considerations: There is evidence that people with developed spirituality become healthier, and when they get sick, they develop less depression and recover more quickly. For many people, spirituality is a source of comfort, well-being, security, meaning, ideal and strength. Spirituality can be understood as a set of mental processes that bring vitality and meaning to life events. It is the human propensity for interest for others and for yourself. It meets the need to find reason and fulfillment in life, as well as the need for hope and will to live well and happily.

Keywords: Science. Spirituality. Mental health

1. Introduction

The influence of spirituality on mental health is a complex and extremely important topic. For some people, spirituality can have a positive impact on mental health, offering comfort, social support and a sense of purpose. Religion and spiritual practices can also provide coping strategies and promote emotional well-being. When the two are correlated, an even greater positive result is seen. However, the relationship between spirituality and mental health can be ambiguous. Some people may experience religious conflict, guilt, or anxiety due to their spiritual beliefs. Furthermore, spirituality does not replace adequate medical or psychological treatments for serious mental disorders, hence the importance of this combination (APA, 2006).

Spirituality helps with mental health in a wide variety of ways. Each person has their individual belief as well as the interaction with other factors. The approach must be personalized and respect the diversity of spiritual and religious perspectives. It becomes something with a great involvement in the search for meaning, purpose and connection with something greater than ourselves. Provides emotional support, a sense of belonging and coping strategies. However, this relationship is not one-dimensional, and spirituality can either strengthen or challenge mental health, depending on individual beliefs and personal experiences. In this discussion, the complexities of this interaction will be explored, taking into account both the positive and challenging aspects of spirituality in mental health, with the aim of providing a comprehensive overview of this constantly evolving topic. It is important for doctors to address spirituality in the office, because research has shown that more spiritual people are healthier physically and mentally and have a lower incidence of heart and psychological diseases. But it's not about the doctor getting there and holding a meeting, it's not about the psychologist recommending a religion to the patient, it's about you learning to look inside yourself (COLPE, 2005).

A reference is analytical psychology, Carl Gustav Jung's theory about looking deeply into our dreams, and images of the psyche and listening to what is called the inner voice. So the integration of spirituality with health will allow us to have more appropriate diagnoses, integrating people into their religious practices, taking care of what is necessary, disciplining and breaking paradigms and prejudices. The patients are respected in their values and ideas, they are spiritual and religious as research shows, the problem is how to approach the patient, how to talk to them, and the great difficulty lies in the fact that some professionals are not prepared and feel Embarrassed on this issue then they resist, because of this there is a long way to go, it is by training these professionals so that they can know how to approach it in an objective way, since the assistance period is generally very short (ALMINHANA and MOREIRA-ALMEIDA, 2009).

In this case, the most difficult thing to do in this

relationship is usually knowing how to meet the needs and duties of others. Because when therapy occurs, this professional's approach is very difficult and relative, because it is a lot about the beliefs and realities of others. It cannot be said that they should do what psychologists say because many do not believe and tend to do the same thing that they say should be done, as they believe and learn completely different things from each other. Most of the time, people's mental health is completely different from others, causing them to believe and see things that are completely contrary to what should be done. Therefore, it is necessary to pay more attention to these aspects and better understand how it works and how it should be done to know what this really means. We have to talk about this need for a religion, for doctrine and recognize that all of this has a bit of spirituality. And with that, it can be said that psychotherapy is highly sought after and used when it comes to spirituality and mental health, because over time, habits and the cultivation of thoughts become better and positive. Psychotherapy tends to help people seek a better quality of life and improve mental health. That is why it is always good and important to have the help of a professional who tends to meet the needs of patients when the matter is essential (ANGERAMI-CAMON, 2002).

2. Methodology

For this research, articles were considered in the Google Scholar database, PePsico, Sage Journals, SMAD, SciELO, Pucpress, JBP, Biblioteca Digital USP, LILACS, NIH and Dialnet in the period between 2001 and 2022. Each section of the article and its review was attributed to a portion of its researchers, separated by two in the abstract, three in the introduction, two on methodology, two on results and discussions, three on epidemiological data, three on conclusions, three on references, and two on review. After completing each installment and its revisions, the sections were compiled and sent to the supervisor for analysis and correction.

3. Results and Discussion

The influence of spirituality on mental health is a topic of increasing importance and complexity, which involves several nuances and challenges. Spirituality can have a significant impact on people's mental health, providing a variety of benefits such as comfort, social support and a sense of purpose. Additionally, religion and spiritual practices often offer coping strategies and contribute to emotional well-being. The correlation between spirituality and mental health can, in many cases, result in substantial improvements in quality of life (GONÇALVES *et al*, 2015).

However, it is essential to recognize that this relationship is not one-dimensional. Some people may experience religious conflict, guilt, or anxiety due to their

spiritual beliefs. Furthermore, spirituality should not replace adequate medical or psychological treatments, especially in the case of serious mental disorders. Therefore, the importance of integrating medical and spiritual approaches is undeniable. The way spirituality influences mental health varies widely from person to person. It is a highly individualized interaction that depends on personal beliefs and experiences. The appropriate approach must be personalized, respecting the diversity of spiritual and religious perspectives. The search for meaning, purpose and connection to something greater than the individual can provide emotional support, a sense of belonging and effective coping strategies (KOENIG, 2012).

Psychotherapy plays a fundamental role in integrating spirituality with mental health. It allows people to explore their spiritual and religious values, helping them understand how these aspects relate to their mental health. The therapeutic approach, often based on theories such as Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology, encourages exploration of dreams and images of the psyche, as well as understanding the inner voice. This can lead to more accurate diagnoses and more effective treatments by incorporating patients' spiritual needs. However, it is recognized that integrating spirituality with mental health also presents significant challenges. Some healthcare professionals may feel unprepared or uncomfortable when addressing spiritual issues with patients, indicating the need for training in this area. Effective communication and respect for patients' values and beliefs are fundamental to adequately address spirituality in clinical practice (PERES *et al*, 2007).

The relationship between spirituality and mental health is a constantly evolving area, and it is essential for healthcare professionals to recognize its importance and be prepared to approach it in a sensitive and respectful manner. By doing this, a more complete and integrated service can be offered, meeting the individual needs and values of patients, thus promoting a significant improvement in mental health and general well-being (PANZINI *et al*, 2007a).

Epistemological Data

Spirituality today is seen as something beneficial for human health since, according to research, people with well-developed spirituality have healthier habits, both physically and psychologically, thus becoming less ill and having a better life. According to the Center for Studies, Research and Documentation in Healthy Cities (CEPEDOC), spirituality helps people deal with suffering, lack of hope and also the loss of important people (PANZINI *et al*, 2007b).

In the health area, spirituality can be seen and found as a positive reinforcement in times of illness, weakness and lack of hope, representing a model of security and strength, making patients with serious illnesses develop less depression and anxiety. Thus, it can be very useful in the effectiveness of clinical treatment. Health is related to quality of life, according to the Quality of Life Assessment Group of the Mental Health Division of the World Health Organization. Spirituality is one of the factors that contribute to quality of life, therefore it is considered a protective factor against behaviors resulting from

psychological illnesses such as suicidal thoughts and drug and alcohol abuse, being seen, in these cases, as a purpose in life. As a consequence, religiosity influences all of life, politics, behavior, education, which reflect on a person's health (DALGALARRONDO, 2007).

Spiritualized people can find their spirituality in everyday situations such as their relationship with society and the environment, practicing the concepts of forgiveness and gratitude, which helps them to better develop their relationship with their own thoughts and thus be healthier. The SBC, Brazilian Society of Cardiology, based on scientific evidence, associates moral illness with heart disease because, according to this evidence, with interventions that are based on forgiveness and gratitude it is possible to control, for example, blood pressure (GONÇALVES *et al*, 2015).

4. Conclusion

It is concluded that spirituality is of great importance for human health, bringing positive aspects and challenges. Thus, spirituality helps in different ways depending on each individual, even though it is a challenging milestone because they have different realities and points of view, spirituality can bring emotional well-being, support and comfort, as well as great challenges. Spirituality does not replace therapeutic and medical treatments, but with the inclusion of this spiritual method, the individual promotes better results in their treatment, contributing to a better quality of life, indicating positive emotions in their journey.

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