



BEWARE! A PANDEMIC CAN HIDE ANOTHER ONE...

Letter of opinion

According to the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ), 12% of the Quebec population presents to varying degrees the symptoms and signs of functional impairment of a mental health disorder. That's one million Quebecers who are suffering.

Some will find themselves in distress; others will be absent from work more often and will see their health slowly decline. The current pandemic will only aggravate this alarming situation.

Although necessary, the measures put in place to counter this pandemic may lead to social isolation, much bereavement, a prolonged sense of insecurity, loss of control, as well as physical or moral exhaustion.

Hopelessness among health care workers

These harmful effects are already being observed. Others will appear in a second stage after these months of struggle to keep one's head above water. Some of these effects could persist and leave after-effects. This risk is particularly threatening for all the caregivers, as well as the family caregivers, who are at the forefront of this collective drama. It is normal to feel helpless when one notices the persistence of the problem, despite sustained efforts.

Unfortunately, too few health and social services workers are still seeking help. How many more cries from the heart or tragic stories like that of Dr. Karine Dion of Granby will we need to hear before we act?

Let's become aware of the magnitude of this swelling wave and deploy a series of measures now to deal with it: promotion of healthy lifestyles, prevention, early detection of symptoms, community support, integrated mental health treatment and rehabilitation services, intersectoral collaboration health-justice-education-work-housing, not to mention the necessary investments in training and research.

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A concerted effort

In mental health, as in other health care settings, the prognosis gets worse over time when appropriate help and services are not available. Quebec spends barely 6% of its budget on mental health. This is not enough. In some G7 countries, England for example, it is more than double that.

As the government develops its next Mental Health Action Plan, let's make sure that we mobilize the entire health network and combine our efforts for a healthy way out of the crisis. Because the current pandemic is hiding another, equally devious one.

The entire population, our parliamentarians and all the players in the health and social services sector are called upon to participate in this vast undertaking. The Collège des médecins will be there.



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