



COVID-19 lockdowns causing deterioration of children's mental health

Description

USA: Since the beginning of the Wuhan coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, children's hospitals all over the country have seen a terrifying surge in the number of children seeking mental health services. The mental health of children has deteriorated during the pandemic due to the repressive lockdowns. Many children have to deal with cabin fever as schools remain closed and they are kept away from their friends and the outdoor activities that give them joy.

America's ongoing post-vaccine COVID-19 outbreak has made matters significantly worse, as resources that could have gone to providing children with counseling and other crucial mental health services are going to other critical areas instead.

In [East Carolina University](#) in Greenville, North Carolina, from June 2020 to late spring of this year, an average of five children was admitted to the medical school's teaching hospital every week. They were admitted due to overdosing on different medications, including acetaminophen, Ritalin, antidepressants and even opiates. Before the pandemic, the teaching hospital only saw five children per month.

Back in May, [Children's Hospital Colorado](#) (CHCO) declared a state of emergency because the number of children it had to treat for mental health issues had surged. The number of kids coming in for anxiety and depression had doubled and tripled, respectively. Substance abuse and eating disorder cases among kids also increased compared to pre-pandemic levels.

"We really have never seen anything like this rapid growth in kids presenting with mental health problems and the severity of those problems," said Jenna Glover, CHCO's director of psychology training. "I've never seen this in my entire career."

Hospitals all over the country have reported similar stories. From April to Oct. 2020, hospitals saw a 24 percent increase in five- to 11-year-old children seeking mental health services, and a 31 percent increase in 12- to 17-year old kids seeking the same kind of help.

“In the last year, there’s been an avalanche of very severely depressed and anxious children and adolescents,” said Michelle Guchereau, a child psychiatrist. She recalls being forced to turn away some potential patients because the number of calls she has been getting has been overwhelming.

“We’ve never had an adequate mental health system in the United States for kids. Never,” said Dr. John Walkup of the [Lurie Children’s Hospital](#) in Chicago. “And so you take an inadequate system to begin with, and then all of a sudden, you put kids who are at elevated risk ... in a very difficult living and life situation. And you now have a crisis of access.”

Lockdowns must end to prioritize children’s social and educational needs

A study of the effects of lockdown and [the tyrannical restrictions](#) that come with it in Australia has found that the solution is for lockdowns to end for the sake of the children. [A preprint version of the study](#) was published on *medRxiv*.

The study believes that while Australia’s lockdown was initially successful at curbing the incidence of COVID-19 infection in the continent, its financial and mental health costs were too much to bear for many families, especially for children forced to stay at home and out of school.

Around a third of families surveyed by the researchers said the pandemic had negatively affected the mental health of their children. The toll of the lockdowns was also great on caregivers, especially female caregivers.

According to the study, the solution is for governments to prioritize the social and educational needs of children. Lockdown had persistent negative effects on their mental needs, and so restrictions had to be rolled back immediately to begin the process of helping kids recover. (Related: [Children born during the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly lower IQ scores, most likely due to masking of mothers.](#))

“The adverse results of the lockdown on families with young children may sometimes be greater than the negative impact of the disease,” wrote Dr. Liji Thomas for *News Medical*.

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