

## EDITORIAL

# Epidemiological research in psychiatry: acting globally

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Epidemiology is the study of the distribution and determinants of health-related states or events. It plays a key role in public health, providing the foundations for developing strategies to control and prevent diseases, and is no less important for psychiatry and mental health. Over the past three decades, psychiatric epidemiology drew attention to the burden of mental disorders, both at the individual level (for instance, by identifying higher mortality rates among those with schizophrenia or showing an increased risk of dementia among patients with poorly controlled bipolar disorder) and at the social level – for instance, by revealing that 7.4% of disability-adjusted life years (DALY) are caused by mental or behavioral disorders.<sup>1</sup>

For these reasons, this field has been considered a priority for psychiatric research.<sup>2,3</sup> Evidence-based, evidence-driven policies are necessary worldwide, an issue that has become even more urgent among low- and middle-income countries, where limited resources demand unfailingly cost-effective investments. A proper diagnosis of mental health necessities in a specific socio-cultural context is the first step toward defining priorities, followed by the identification of the most vulnerable groups that would benefit the most from preventive or clinical interventions.

Aligned with this important field and its numerous challenges, the *Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry* has endorsed articles covering “global” psychiatric epidemiological research in Brazil and Latin America. Substance use-related disorders,<sup>4</sup> the impact of violence and early traumatic experiences on mental health outcomes,<sup>5</sup> and health services utilization<sup>6</sup> are some of the themes covered in this issue. Psychometric evaluation of screening instruments is also discussed in a number of articles, highlighting the importance of using proper instruments, adequately tested for specific populations, in specific cultural contexts. This in-depth look into methodological approaches for measuring and quantifying psychological distress and mental disorders has also been growing, as it provides the tools for adequate epidemiological studies.<sup>7</sup>

The number of international collaborations in the above-mentioned articles is remarkable. This robust process of

internationalization of Brazilian psychiatry research further raises the bar for domestic scientific output and reinforces the leading role that Brazil plays in this field. This partially explains the growing importance of the *Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry* in the international context. The articles published in this issue represent a wide variety of countries, such as Argentina,<sup>8</sup> Colombia,<sup>5</sup> and Iran.<sup>9</sup> The high quality of the work carried out by the editorial staff and reviewers is being recognized, and the vocation of the *Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry* as a regional leader, championing local articles with global implications – hence the term *global* used in our title – becomes increasingly evident. The solid work developed thus far makes us optimistic for the future of the *Journal* and confident that great accomplishments are still to come.

## Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest.

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