

Sounding the Alarm for Children's Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic



Increasingly, research confirming the negative effects of COVID-19 safety measures on the mental health of children and adolescents is emerging. A Canadian study looking at 2.5 million children and adolescents aged 3 to 17 years found that these children were experiencing increased psychological stress resulting in increased rates of substance use disorders and psychotic disorders. The largest increases were noted for mood and anxiety disorders (74.7%), psychosis (73.2%), substance use (83.6%), social problems (64.6%), and neurodevelopmental disorders (69.8%).

Dr Randy Beck, the Executive Director of the Institute of Functional Neuroscience, Perth, Australia stated "We are particularly passionate about these problems that are producing both acute, short term crises and long-term psychological effects in these kids. We are seeing increasing numbers of children presenting to the institute with anxiety, depression, and suicidal behaviours among school-aged children and adolescents (especially for girls). When further queried about why this is happening Dr Beck responded, "The adverse effects of lockdowns, social isolation, educational adaptations, and loss of moderating community supports are without a doubt significant contributor.

The good news is that we do have effective treatments for paediatric mental health conditions. The Institute has been working with a variety of health professions to develop collaborative-care models to support symptom reduction and long-term

healthy brain changes that put these kids back on a positive trajectory. The challenge is ensuring that all children and adolescents who need these treatments have access.

Dr Beck concluded, “These researchers and others have sounded the alarm. We cannot wait to respond to the distress and escalating mental health and suicide crisis. Prioritizing children’s and adolescents’ mental health demands a transformational societal and systems solution that protects their future”.

The Institute of Functional Neuroscience is in Perth, Australia. They are internationally recognised as experts in neuroplastic rehabilitation and restructuring. If you wish to enquire about becoming a patient at the institute or have any other questions, please contact us on 618 6254 2282 or email us at info@ifn.net.au.

References

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