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Mental Health: a global challenge in the 21st century



World Mental Health Day is held annually on the 10th of October, to raise awareness and inform on mental health issues and win support. At the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the group of researchers that make up the **CORE-Mental Health** network are working with a translational approach, to address the various challenges inherent to the different stages of the value chain of mental health.

Mental health encompasses our emotional, social and psychic well-being, and as such, it is essential to promote it and protect it in each and all of life's stages. However, statistics do not provide us with encouraging data. According to the WHO, a quarter of the world's population will suffer from some mental disorder during their lifespan. Another study on the global burden of disease has shown that mental pathologies currently represent, on a global scale, the biggest single healthcare cost, a cost that is constantly increasing and which is expected, by 2030, to exceed US\$6 trillion a year (more than the cost of diabetes, cancer and lung disease put together). Such a tremendous health and economic burden can be partly explained by the fact that nearly half of all mental disorders begin early in life and that having them increases the risk of suffering from other chronic diseases. Perhaps, for this reason, popular wisdom says that "without mental health, there is no health."

Providing solutions to a complex multifactorial problem that dramatically affects our society and has a big economic impact requires an approach from various fronts, research being one of them. For this reason, the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona has opted for pooling efforts and resources with the aim of contributing to the huge task of providing innovative

solutions in the field of mental health. As a result, the **CORE- Mental Health** research community was born, grouping together researchers who are each working within their own area of expertise, to tackle the challenges inherent to each stage of the mental health value chain, with a translational approach.

Health research only makes sense as long as outcomes are validated and translated to society, and mental health is no exception to this. That is why the interaction of the research community with both industry and the voluntary and community sectors is an absolute necessity and, as such, must be part of our day to day. The final challenge is to contribute to society with tools and answers to key issues, such as identifying the primary factors that make someone more vulnerable or resilient to mental pathology, validating biomarkers that will allow us to make quicker and more accurate diagnoses, or optimizing the monitoring of a patient's evolution using, for example, new technologies.

After all, the ultimate goal of mental health research and its reason for existence is, and must continue to be, the individual's well-being.

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