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Tele-service as a professional support tool: welcome and emotional listening in pandemic COVID-19

Tele-servicio como herramienta de apoyo profesional: bienvenida y escucha emocional en pandemia COVID-19

Teleatendimento como ferramenta de apoio profissional: acolhimento e escuta emocional na pandemia COVID-19

ABSTRACT

Objective: To report the experience of a telemarketing project in the emotional listening of professionals from a Social Organization in Health in Pandemic. **Method:** Experience report of the implementation of an Emotional Reception project for health professionals in the city of Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, as a strategy to support employees during the COVID-19 Pandemic period from May to July 2020. **Results:** 130 cases were registered, covering 49 employees. The call center was a good solution to provide an opportunity to listen during Pandemic. **Conclusion:** Listening qualified by a psychologist in helping employees in the pandemic was relevant due to the lack of care focused on the psychological treatment of health professionals. The use of Information and Communication Technology played a fundamental role in bringing the volunteer professional closer to the institution's employee, who were apprehensive about the Pandemic situation and the daily risk of contamination with the virus.

DESCRIPTORS: Volunteers; Mental Health; Psychological Distress; Information and Communication Technology; Health professionals.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Informar la experiencia de un proyecto de telemarketing en la escucha emocional de profesionales de una Organización Social en Salud en Pandemia. **Método:** Informe de experiencia de la implementación de un proyecto de Recepción Emocional para profesionales de la salud en la ciudad de Fortaleza, Ceará, Brasil, como una estrategia de apoyo a los empleados durante el período de la Pandemia COVID-19 de mayo a julio de 2020. **Resultados:** Se registraron 130 casos, que cubrían a 49 empleados. El centro de llamadas fue una buena solución para brindar la oportunidad de escuchar durante la pandemia. **Conclusión:** La escucha calificada por un psicólogo en la ayuda a los empleados en la pandemia fue relevante debido a la falta de atención enfocada en el tratamiento psicológico de los profesionales de la salud. El uso de las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación jugó un papel fundamental en el acercamiento del profesional voluntario al colaborador de la institución, quienes estaban aprensivos ante la situación de Pandemia y el riesgo diario de contaminación con el virus.

DESCRIPTORES: Voluntarios; Salud Mental; Distrés Psicológico; Tecnología de La Información y La Comunicación; Profesionales de la Salud.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Relatar a experiência de um projeto de teleatendimento na escuta emocional de profissionais de uma Organização Social em Saúde na Pandemia. **Método:** Relato de experiência da implantação de um projeto de Acolhida Emocional para profissionais de saúde na cidade de Fortaleza, Ceará, Brasil, como estratégia de apoio aos funcionários durante a Pandemia da COVID-19 no período de maio a julho de 2020. **Resultados:** Registrados 130 atendimentos, abrangendo 49 funcionários. O teleatendimento foi uma boa solução para oportunizar a escuta durante Pandemia. **Conclusão:** Escuta qualificada por um psicólogo na ajuda aos funcionários na pandemia foi relevante devido à carência de cuidados voltados ao trato psicológico dos profissionais da área da saúde. O uso de Tecnologia de Informação e Comunicação teve papel fundamental na aproximação do profissional voluntário com o funcionário da instituição, que se encontravam aprensivos com a situação de Pandemia e o risco diário de contaminação com o vírus.

DESCRIPTORES: Voluntários; Saúde mental; Angústia Psicológica; Tecnologia da Informação e Comunicação; Profissionais da Saúde.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic for the new coronavirus has proved to be one of the greatest health challenges worldwide on the last decades. ⁽¹⁾ Bringing relevant impacts on the lives of individuals worldwide, drawing attention for the reach it had and the speed with which it spread. ⁽²⁾

In Brazil, it was no different, with some particular aggravating factors, among them, social inequality and the condition of populations living in a situation of agglomeration, favoring the increase in cases. The importance and severity of the new virus can be eviden-

ced with its rapid reach in a short period of time, the first case being confirmed on February 26th and March 3rd with a total of 500 suspected cases. The update of November 12th, 2020 from the Ministry of Health through the Coronavirus Panel, confirms cases and deaths accumulated in 5.590.025 and 161.106, respectively, and a total of 5.064.344 recovered cases. ⁽³⁾

Insufficient scientific knowledge about COVID-19, its transmission speed and its lethality, especially in more vulnerable populations, has consequently brought a scenario of uncertainty in its confrontation and an overload on every health machine, requiring pro-

professionals to impose changes in the care delivery routine. ⁽⁴⁾

For health professionals who are at the forefront of tackling COVID-19, the impact is even greater. Doctors, nurses, technicians, physiotherapists, psychologists and social workers are some of the categories that develop essential services and are exposed daily to the risk of contamination. ⁽⁵⁾

The arrival of the pandemic in the country and the way it has been evolving have created new challenges for researchers, professionals and institutions involved in the promotion of workers' health, and the psychological implications cannot be neglected, which can be more

lasting and prevalent than COVID-19's own involvement.^(6,7)

In addition to the population's illness, there is then a concern with health professionals, who, indispensable, have become a large group vulnerable to the emotional and psychological consequences of facing the pandemic. They face exhausting routines, where the focus is on giving everything to care for infected patients. In this scenario, the frontline mental health support is also the responsibility of the community, responsible for informing, validating and respecting those who care.⁽⁷⁾

Faced with this reality, health institutions needed to think and implement actions that could provide emotional, therapeutic and psychological support to health professionals, covering not only those on the front line, but also those who are in the rear, supporting professionals in the provision of assistance services. Then, in Fortaleza-CE, the Emotional Reception project, promoted by a Social Health Organization (OSS), together with volunteer professionals in the field of psychology, confirming that voluntary work is provided for by law 9.608 of February 18th, 1998, stating in its article 1, that, "voluntary service is considered, for the purposes of this Law, the unpaid activity provided by an individual to a public entity of any nature or a private non-profit institution that has civic objectives, cultural, educational, scientific, recreational or personal assistance".⁽⁸⁾

With the lockdown, people had their right of movement restricted, consequently, class councils had to resume the discussion about remote appointments, as some patients were unable to interrupt care during this period. With this, the Federal Council of Psychology (Conselho Federal de Psicologia - CFP) approved Normative Instruction 1, published on March 17th, 2020 and Resolution CFP 04, which instructs on online work during this period and dispenses with the need to wait for prior registration approval, with the council,

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as provided for in CFP Resolution No. 11/2018, to initiate assistance in this modality. At that time, the use of information and communication technology (ICTs), through teleservice, was the solution for emotional reception through therapeutic listening to health professionals.^(9,10,11,12)

The need to carry out this experience report came from the implementation and monitoring of the Emotional Reception project, with the provision of psychological assistance to professionals in the health field, by telephone, on a voluntary basis by professionals in the field of psychology, such as support in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.

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In this sense, this article aimed to report the experience of the call center in the psychological listening of health professionals of an OSS, during the Pandemic.

METHOD

This is a descriptive study of an experience report idealized from the implementation and monitoring of an Emotional Reception project focused on providing care as a form of psychological and emotional reception and listening to health professionals in the city of Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, promoted by an OSS, as a strategy to support employees during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The OSS in question manages health equipment in the city and state, with units in Fortaleza and in the interior of Ceará. The project was made available to all employees. For knowledge and dissemination of the project, the use of banners in health units, digital media (Intranet, Instagram and WhatsApp) were used as strategies, also through the

Engineering, Safety and Occupational Medicine Service (Serviço de Engenharia, Segurança e Medicina do Trabalho - SESMT) and the People Management Center (Núcleo de Gestão de Pessoas - NPGP), in addition to work done with the units' coordinators.

04 exclusive telephone lines were made available for scheduling appointments, where the employee made the telephone contact with the SESMT seeking the appointment for a first reception with the volunteer psychologist. In this initial contact, SESMT provided guidance on the purpose of the project, secrecy and confidentiality of all information related to the service, as well as the online service model (via video call by application). Another strategy was through the active search carried out by SESMT for employees removed from the institution due to suspected COVID-19 infection.

The consultations took place between May and July 2020, from Monday to Saturday, by voluntary adherence, in three shifts (morning, afternoon and night), thus seeking to offer the target audience a flexibility of days and times, since, the possibility of concern with psychological interventions being considered as secondary care was taken into account. And it counted on the volunteering of 28 professionals in the area of Psychology.

RESULT

In total, 130 calls were made to 49 employees, with an average duration of 50 minutes each call. Although the project was published in all units, only part of the units based in Fortaleza had adherence, which may be explained by the fact that some units have a psychology service and these have set up a welcoming scheme for their professionals locally.

The profile of the professional who was welcomed by the project was administrative staff at OSS headquarters and basic health units, in addition to the professionals from 9 emergency care units (Unidade de Pronto Atendimento

- UPA). Most of them already had some degree of previous psychological suffering, which was enhanced during this time of stress.

Listening as a model of psychological care in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic

The Federal Council of Psychology (Conselho Federal de Psicologia - CFP) has long been about psychological listening as a possibility of care - in other contexts - corroborating the choice of strategy by OSS as a means of taking care of the psychological health of its employees.⁽¹³⁾

Emotional listening is characterized by being a caring, welcoming and non-invasive relationship, for which the willingness to listen is required, always respecting the time of elaboration and reporting of the traumatic fact, also consisting of offering a place and time for expression of desires and demands.⁽¹⁴⁾

On the other hand, psychotherapy - not used in the project - has as its scope of work a scientific process of understanding, analysis, and intervention that takes place in a systematic and controlled way of psychological methods and techniques. Also, there is the establishment of a contract between professional and patient, and; it has a character of continuity, since the professional must provide, whenever requested by the person assisted or his responsible, information about the development of psychotherapy, according to the Code of Ethics.⁽¹⁵⁾

Since the beginning, when OSS became concerned, the questioning: "How can we offer our employees support for their fears, anxieties and uncertainties in this scenario of pandemic and public calamity". There was always a concern with the ethical and technical precepts of psychological care, especially, from the point of view of legality, the differentiation between Emotional Reception/listening and Psychotherapy. The entire crisis generated as a result of the pandemic triggered suffering and the ex-

posure of human and social weaknesses, with a significant intensity for health professionals, who besides being within the context of a pandemic, are daily exposed to the risks of contamination in the care of population infected by COVID-19. As a result, OSS chose the model of psychological listening as a tool for psychological support and support to its employees, in the search for relief from stressors arising from the routine of coping with the pandemic and from social isolation and other limitations imposed with a view to reducing the virus proliferation.

Emotional/psychological listening has a scope for modeling psychological duty, with a non-directive psychological consultation proposal, having as its characteristics its immediacy, availability of the moment of emergency, of the need. Emotional and psychological listening is thought and practiced, basically, as a way of welcoming and responding to demands for psychological help. Another very specific characteristic of the psychological listening model is how it happens in practice, being outlined by three aspects: that of the institution that offers the service; that of the professional available for the unplanned, and; the client who seeks help for their urgent needs.^(16,17)

The emotional and psychological listening performed through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) was the most viable, safe and worthy of support to health related to the psychological treatment of OSS employees, with the aim of providing directed support and support to its employees, seeking to comply with all the relevant guidelines of the Council of the area, always guided by ethical conduct, as well as in the secrecy and confidentiality of all information regarding the assistance.⁽¹⁸⁾

The role and responsibility of OSS in promoting the psychological health of professionals during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Due to the high transmissibility of the virus, a large proportion of those in-

fected, lack of vaccine and proven drug therapy, insufficient test coverage, prolonged duration of clinical conditions and the experiences of other countries explain the decisions that caused measures of social isolation, determining that only essential services were maintained. Emphasizing that, in this context, for some categories, such as health professionals, there was an intensification of tasks. There is also a large volume of guidelines for hygiene, the use of masks, alcohol gel and constant hand washing is recommended. ^(19,20)

Managing the work processes of health professionals, whether administrative or assistance, in times of Pandemic, involves issues of changes in decision making, work processes, care practices, routines; in addition to issues such as: management of financial resources, removal of family and friends, threats and aggression, perpetrated by people who seek care and do not feel welcomed; generating physical and psychological overload in the teams, leading to the emergence of negative emotions, such as fear, anguish, anxiety, depression, indignation, frustration at not being able to save lives despite efforts. Another important aspect that has been noticed are the negative cognitive evaluations, where professionals have been more sensitive to social risks, presenting a decrease in happiness and satisfaction with life, which can reach extremes such as delirium, psychosis and suicide. ^(7,8,20)

It should also be noted that the frontline teams were overwhelmed by the need to interface the emotional demands of family members and companions, as the strict measures to contain the infection makes direct contact between the psychologist and the people who have COVID-19 be rare in places with higher levels of contamination. ⁽²¹⁾

With these changes in health and illness, a greater number of problems and demands of the psychological and emotional tract happened, making it necessary to deal with issues in the process of death and dying, and health profes-

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nals need to take care of stressful symptoms in the face of this reality, to avoid psychic illness. ⁽⁸⁾

At the height of the Pandemic in Brazil, difficulties were reported in the acquisition of supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as the highest rate of medical licenses for health professionals, in the comparison between the first and the second half of the year. March 2020. ⁽⁷⁾ This fact can also be observed in the institution in question, where there was an increase in the number of testimonials in relation to flu-like symptoms, but there was also an increase in testimonials for causes related to symptoms and signs related to emotional state, which drew attention and led the institution to think about how to work with its teams at that time.

Ordinance No. 639, of March 31, 2020, deals with the Strategic Action "O Brasil Conta Comigo - Saúde Profissionais", aimed at training and registering health professionals, to face the coronavirus pandemic (COVID -19). ⁽²²⁾ This was a strategy of the Ministry of Health, but it did not focus on the emotional part of the work teams, even so the institution encouraged its teams to participate in this moment, because in this training the protocols for biosafety and care in patient care were worked COVID -19, which was an important health promotion action to avoid contamination of the teams.

The psychologist's work with the health teams can collaborate in promoting mental health and preventing negative psychological implications for these professionals, by offering support and guidance on how to deal with the cases of people who do not accept their diagnosis and therefore do not adhere to the recommendations and treatment, as well as working with the professional's acceptance to face the situation where he/she cannot always save lives and the distance from family and friends. ⁽⁷⁾

Faced with the pandemic scenario, the institution identified that the preservation of the health of its profes-

nals - where they kept working with greater intensity of activities, responsibilities and daily exposure to stressful situations - was not just about promotion,

prevention and treatment within the scope physical, but also in the psychological and emotional treatment. It has become as essential to control the spread of the disease in the workforce, as well as to provide therapeutic and psychological listening that could relieve fear and anguish, giving space and support so that health professionals can share them and receive guidance professional, thus allowing the search for strategies to face their own emotions, so that mental health could be taken care of.

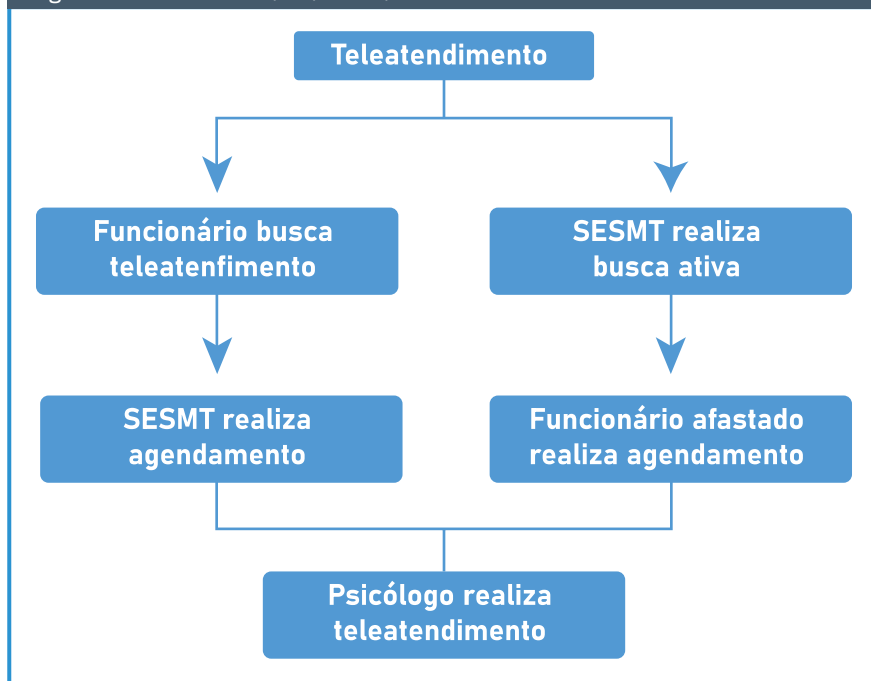
The experience in question went through the same challenges pointed out above by the literature, the management group began to notice the increase in the number of certificates and conflicts in the units and at that moment the idea of thinking about a model of support for employees, who cannot stay at home in Home Office, feeling welcomed, cared for and protected by the institution.

Therefore, OSS assistance and administrative professionals were offered a service of emotional and psychological listening through volunteer professionals in the field of psychology. The participation of employees in psychological care was due to spontaneous adherence or active search by SESMT with employees on leave due to suspicion or confirmation of infection related to COVID-19, the flow is described in Figure 1.

In both models of adhesion, passive or active, the project management team had information that had the mandatory nature to be passed on to the employee demanding assistance, thus seeking the organization of services, the good management of the schedule of available hours of the volunteer professionals, reinforcement regarding the security, confidentiality and confidentiality of all information, preservation of the telephone numbers of volunteer professionals, scheduling flow, as well as for monitoring and analyzing demands, as described in Figure 2.

Some challenges were faced by the OSS during the project, including: composition of the team of psychologists

Figure 1. Flowchart of psychological call center to employees of a Social Health Organization. Fortaleza, CE, Brazil, 2020.



Source: Prepared by the author, 2020.

Figure 2. Orientations regarding psychological telemarketing to employees of a Social Health Organization. Fortaleza, CE, Brazil, 2020.

- 1- O objetivo do projeto é proporcionar o acolhimento aos profissionais de saúde diante das circunstâncias de trabalho oriundas no enfrentamento ao COVID-19, portanto, não tratando-se de Psicoterapia.
- 2- O projeto é destinado aos profissionais da OSS e das unidades geridas: UPA, APS e Sede;
- 3- O psicólogo voluntário realizará o contato via WhatsApp chamada de vídeo;
- 4- Todos os agendamentos com os Psicólogos voluntários só serão realizados via SESMT da OSS;
- 5- O profissional da OSS poderá ter 01 atendimento por semana, caso o mesmo necessite de novo atendimento, respeitado o período semanal, deverá entrar em contato com o SESMT da OSS;
- 6- Dia e horário da sessão devem ser estritamente respeitados pelo funcionários da OSS;
- 7- A sessão tem duração de 50 minutos, e no dia e horário deverá aguardar o contato do Psicólogo voluntário, devendo estar em local reservado para proteção e confidencialidade das informações;
- 8- Todos os atrasos ocorridos para início do atendimento, por indisponibilidade do colaborador, o atendimento seguirá até o horário final da sessão. Recomendar ao colaborador a pontualidade na utilização de seu agendamento;
- 9- O aconselhamento com o Psicólogo não gera nenhum tipo de atestado médico;
- 10- Após a realização da sessão, a OSS orienta que o telefone do Psicólogo não seja divulgado nem disponibilizado, reforçando que todos os agendamentos são realizados apenas via SESMT da OSS.

Source: Prepared by the author, 2020.

outside the institution for voluntary assistance; propagation and dissemination of the project in the midst of the chaotic pandemic moment, both due to the excess of tasks required and the emergency nature of the period, as well as the urgent need to implement the project; adhesion of active and retired professionals to the proposed interventions; the impossibility of professionals to comply with schedules for the moment of psychological listening due to work overload, as well as the volume of appointments; and the service delivery model itself, via online, which required both psychology professionals and OSS employees to make adjustments to the call center format.

Relevance of call center in the Pandemic scenario

The pandemic has represented a challenge to health systems and the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been handled in the strategies of the call center as a tool to expand the provision of services to people in remote psychological care as a mechanism for welcoming people. Complaints related to mental health. Given the strict recommendations, the call center helps to promote the psychological health of people in a time of urgency and public calamity, promoting rappro-

chement with professionals in the field of psychology, contributing to the strengthening of a support network. ^(10,23)

Such technology is considered a fundamental resource because it reduces the risk of contamination of people and the spread of the disease, enabling the care of healthy people or people with pre-existing diseases and comorbidities that, although not infected, could not attend a psychological service personally. ⁽²⁴⁾

The call center is being a feasible solution for the current times and the ease caused by the distance service has enabled both the adhesion and participation of psychologists in volunteering, allowing their participation in their homes; as the participation of employees, who could participate in their homes, too, in their moments of rest.

The challenges encountered by the project during the call center were the issues related to internet fluctuations, generating interruptions of the moment, these, when they happened, were evaluated by the responsible psychologists and had the possibility of being rescheduled, if the same considered that the time. Another challenge was the resistance of the participants to the call center mode, which was overcome by the conversation with the SESMT and the alignment between the volunteer

psychologists, where a WhatsApp group was created where it was a place to ask questions and exchange experiences that emerged along the way. Of the project, always cherishing the confidentiality and anonymity of services.

CONCLUSION

In the lived experience, the importance of qualified listening by a psychologist in helping employees in this pandemic and intense activity was perceived. It was evidenced by the project team a lack of care aimed at the psychological treatment of health professionals, mainly in the context of public calamity and with intense stressors.

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) had a fundamental role in bringing volunteer psychology professionals closer to the OSS employee, who in the context was, in many cases, far from family and friends, apprehensive about the situation of Pandemic the daily risk of contamination with the virus. Through its use, OSS can urgently care for its employees, with caution, care, ethics, respect, always seeking to provide the best welcome and emotional listening, in an attempt to reduce excess stress and other symptoms that generate some type of anguish and distress. ■

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