The Brazilian Public Mental Health System: physical activity as part of the treatment for severe mental illness

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BACKGROUND

The regular practice of physical activity has been recommended by the scientific literature for its efficacy on physical and mental health. Brazilian Public Mental Health System is composed by a multidisciplinary approach which includes physical exercise professionals (PEP)¹.

PURPOSE

The aim of this study was to evaluate the Brazilian government distribution of PEP working in the treatment of severe mental illnesses in the Public Mental Health System.

METHODS

This research was conducted in National Register of Health Establishments Database², from November 2018 to January 2019. The searched included only Psychosocial Care Centers (CAPS), a community treatment network for individuals of all ages with mental and substance use disorders. We verified the records of exercise professionals in CAPS throughout Brazil, moreover, pertinent geographic and socioeconomic data.

RESULTS

A total of 2,469 CAPS were found, but only 458 had exercise professionals registered, which totalized 546 professionals. With regard to different target population, 326 professionals were working for adults with severe mental disorders, 151 for people with substance use disorders and 69 for children and adolescents with mental disorders. The number of exercise professionals had a significant variation according to the state of the country ($p < 0.001$). It was analyzed that the cities most distant from capital have less presence of these professionals ($p < 0.05$), as well as cities with lower Human Development Indexes - HDI ($p < 0.05$).

CONCLUSION

The data indicate that physical activity programs have not been offered by the Brazilian government as part of the community treatment network in its public mental health policy. Moreover, situations of greater socioeconomic and/or geographic vulnerability hinder the presence of exercise professionals even more.

Table 1. Presentation of CAPS' numbers per state citizens ratio; CAPS' with physical exercise professional numbers per state citizens ratio; physical exercise professionals numbers per state citizens ratio.

State	n CAPS/ citizens (100,000)	n CAPS with PEP/ citizens (100,000)	n PEP/ citizens (100,000)
RR	1.931	0.429	1.288
PI	1.925	1.025	1.118
SE	1.879	0.699	0.830
AL	1.781	0.534	0.594
GO	1.033	0.295	0.502
PB	2.323	0.400	0.500
RN	1.283	0.399	0.399
CE	1.319	0.233	0.355
RS	1.538	0.274	0.327
BA	1.481	0.281	0.307
MA	1.005	0.172	0.230
PR	1.220	0.221	0.230
PE	1.445	0.202	0.202
SC	1.431	0.172	0.172
RJ	0.897	0.138	0.138
PA	0.768	0.120	0.132
AP	0.758	0.126	0.126
AC	0.734	0.122	0.122
MG	1.303	0.081	0.085
MS	0.604	0.076	0.076

CAPS= Psychosocial Care Center; PEP= physical exercise professional.

References: 1. Brasil. Ministério da Saúde. Secretaria de Atenção à Saúde. Departamento de Ações Programáticas Estratégicas. Saúde Mental no SUS: os centros de atenção psicossocial. Brasília, 2004. 2. Cadastro Nacional de Estabelecimentos de Saúde. Accessed in: jan 2019. Retrieved from: <http://cnes.datasus.gov.br>.

Figure 1. Geographic representation of physical exercise professionals distribution in Brazilian CAPS. 1A. Absolute values of professionals per state. 1B. Relative values of professionals per state citizens ratio (100,000).