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Dr Christine Tretter, MD

Specialist in psychiatry, expert; nutritional psychiatry, Vienna

Overlooked side effects of the corona pandemic

>> **First lockdown:** It was a special experience when I made my way to my surgery on Wednesday 18 March 2020, quite alone, across Stephansplatz in the centre of Vienna. Instead of the usual crowds of people, there was an unforgettable atmosphere of calm. Shops were closed and the numerous offices were empty. My colleagues, including my secretary, were already in their home offices. Only all my patients appeared without any problems. Nevertheless, I decided to switch my work to remote working. This was also accepted without any problems and in a relaxed manner.

Spring 2021: In preparation for this article, I look at the documents from my lecture at the University of Vienna in June 2021 on the topic of mental stress in society. The atmosphere was now heated, with statistics on test numbers, incidences of test positives, inpatient admissions and deaths being presented daily. Fear was fuelled.

The media also liked to report on increases in domestic violence, mental disorders and rampant loneliness.

Both the spokesperson for women's shelters and the head of Vienna's psychosocial services, one of the largest such care organisations in Austria, disagreed with the circulating reports of a dramatic development (1,2). The experiences of the first lockdowns thus contradicted the media reports and are now well documented (3,4).

The fact that people behave differently in exceptional situations was also not taken into account. There was a lot of solidarity and support for fellow human beings, even in the big city, which also reduced fears.

There was even a certain amount of relief. Here are some practical examples: Student with anorexia experiences relaxation through external deceleration, civil servant with anxiety disorder regrets the early end of the lockdown, others enjoy time in family life.

From a medical-psychiatric perspective, the horrendous numbers of severe depression at the time were based on screening tests without the necessary verification of the diagnosis. The image was created that the entire population was affected by depression, anxiety, isolation and related disorders.

Had we now almost all become ill, not because of the virus, but also because of the various repressive measures that were considered necessary and sensible by many, and in some cases still are today?

In psychiatry, we explain mental decompensation and illness as a combination of an individual psychophysical disposition and a multifactorial stress event when coping strategies fail over time.

For some people, this usually only occurs after numerous lockdowns, social discrimination, economic worries, increasing social tensions, etc.

The media then emphasised the need for therapy , which contributed to the dam breaking.

After social upheavals, the subjective legitimisation to use therapeutic services emerged (1.2020 -- 6. 2022: approx. + 50%); (5). Psychotherapeutic practices were virtually stormed, and this also applied to psychiatric treatment. However, anamnestic examinations showed that many illnesses or disorders had already existed for years, making it difficult for seriously ill people to find help .

Vaccination: Conversely, there are hardly any studies on the change in mental stability with the start of vaccination, as there was now hope of normalisation. The political promises were enormous. However, in addition to the relief of possible protection, many people were also very sceptical about the rapidly developed miracle weapon and were therefore hesitant.

Social destabilisation, incipient desolidarisation: From 2021, lockdowns and the exclusion of people without vaccination protection were added to the already existing physical threat of infection. Feelings of guilt arose: it was said that grandchildren could kill their grandparents, that unvaccinated people were responsible for the pandemic, and the aggressive and discriminatory attribution of those who waited to be immunised or were simply insecure is well known. (6, 7).

Boosters: A third vaccination was now necessary. Those who had only been immunised twice, as originally planned, were now also excluded from social life. The Austrian Medical Association considered making coronavirus vaccination compulsory for doctors practising their profession and demanded a triple vaccination to enter the chamber.

Compulsory vaccination: The split finally reached a climax with a planned compulsory vaccination programme. This was decided in Austria in 2022, but then not implemented. But what did this mean for citizens? An unexecuted law still de facto means that the unvaccinated are in the wrong, feelings of shame were provoked.

The rift in society and in many families became ever clearer in everyday life, and the disappointment of countless people continued to grow. Behind the anger, rage and disappointment, however, ultimately lies a great deal of silent sadness, triggered by the state and politics.

To this day, in many cases various medical complaints following vaccinations are neither reported nor recognised. Many of these people were convinced that they had done the right thing and are now suffering greatly from the ignorant or mostly derogatory treatment of them. This is reflected in comments like these:

... *‚I'll never trust them again'*,
... *‚I won't get vaccinated at all'*,
... *‚everything they promised was wrong in the end'.*

In my view, we now actually have a veritable problem in society. Today we talk about lockdowns and the consequences of infection, but hardly anything about the consequences of the political handling of the population and the psychological consequences for individuals and entire families.

It is understandable that most people now just want to forget, but a further polarisation can already be observed in the current crises. <<

Literature
Online: https://t1p.de/4klqu