

RESUMO - COMPROMISSO SOCIAL DO MÉDICO CATÓLICO

PROJECT LUCAS: A LONGITUDINAL EXPERIENCE REPORT ON MENTAL HEALTH, SPIRITUALITY, AND SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONG PHYSICIANS AND MEDICAL STUDENTS

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Introduction: Burnout, anxiety, depression, social isolation, substance abuse, family conflicts, medical errors, and suicide represent growing concerns among physicians and medical students worldwide. Mental suffering in this population is

frequently underdiagnosed and undertreated, particularly because of stigma, excessive workloads, and difficulties in seeking emotional support. In this context, initiatives focused on integral health, spirituality, and mutual support may represent important tools for prevention and care.

Case Description: Project Lucas is a nonprofit initiative founded in João Pessoa, Brazil, in August 2008 by volunteer physicians concerned about the increasing incidence of emotional distress among physicians and medical students. The project emerged from the perception that these groups often experience severe isolation, which may intensify depressive symptoms, anxiety, professional exhaustion, psychosomatic manifestations, alcohol and drug abuse, family crises, and reduced quality of life. Since its creation, the project has promoted in-person and online meetings dedicated to themes related to integral health, spirituality, meaning of life, mental health, work-life balance, and the physician-patient relationship. Activities include lectures, group discussions, round tables, live broadcasts, reading groups, and reflective encounters conducted by psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, and other invited specialists. The initiative adopts an inclusive approach that respects spirituality, religious beliefs, gender identity, and individual singularities, while encouraging interreligious dialogue and unconditional mutual support. Although inspired by Christian teachings and especially the example of Jesus Christ, the project is not institutionally linked to any religion. An active messaging group was also established to promote daily interaction among participants, allowing the sharing of personal experiences, emotional struggles, prayers, reflections, scientific themes, artistic expressions, and philosophical discussions. Over the years, the project has explored themes such as depression among physicians, existential dilemmas, the importance of rest, art as therapy, neuroscience, faith, and Viktor Frankl's logotherapy. Group reading of books related to meaning, suffering, and purpose has also been encouraged. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiative organized a choir and a theater group, highlighting the therapeutic role of art and collective expression. In November 2024, the project promoted its first symposium on health and spirituality among physicians and medical students, bringing together speakers from different regions of the country.

Conclusion: Project Lucas represents a successful long-term experience in promoting mental health, spirituality, social connection, and quality of life among physicians and medical students. By creating a safe environment for dialogue, emotional support, and reflection on meaning and purpose, the initiative may contribute to reducing isolation, strengthening resilience, and preventing psychological suffering in healthcare professionals.

Palavras-chave: mental health; burnout; spirituality; physicians; resilience.