

# Mental Health In Primary Care: Development Of An Educational Guide For Health Professionals

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## **Abstract**

*This article presents the creation of an educational guide aimed at health professionals, focusing on mental health care in primary care in a municipality in southwest Paraná, Brazil. The guide aims to provide clear and accessible guidance on mental health care practices, addressing topics such as Psychiatric Reform, the stigma associated with mental disorders, and management strategies in the context of primary care. The development of the guide was based on a literature review and national guidelines, resulting in a practical tool for health professionals' daily work.*

**Keywords:** *Mental Health, Primary Care, Psychiatric Reform, Educational Guide, Management Strategies.*

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## **I. Introduction**

The approach to psychological suffering, whether common or in more severe cases, is a daily occurrence in Primary Care. Strategic approaches and care are fundamental to ensuring adherence and continuity in mental health care, both at the Basic Health Unit (UBS) and the Psychosocial Care Centers (CAPS), prioritizing the principles of Brazil's Unified Health System (SUS).

According to the National Primary Care Policy (PNAB), revised by Ordinance 2423 of September 21, 2017, Primary Care is reaffirmed as the preferred entry point into the health system (BRASIL, 2017).

The ordinance states that the principles of universal access, equity, and comprehensiveness must be guaranteed in the care of all individuals requiring health services, including mental health care. These principles must be operationalized in Primary Care. Universality, defined as universal and continuous access to health services, is exercised in Primary Care through the reception of all individuals seeking services, providing easy access without discrimination, and striving to meet the population's needs (BRASIL, 2017).

In the PNAB, equity is defined as the provision of care that acknowledges differences in living and health conditions and adapts according to people's needs, considering that the right to health must address social disparities and respond to diversity (BRASIL, 2017).

And as the last principle, comprehensiveness is achieved when care networks meet the health needs of the registered population while preserving their autonomy. In the PNAB, comprehensiveness must cover the areas of health promotion, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, harm reduction, and palliative care (BRASIL, 2017).

For mental health actions to be effectively developed in primary care while ensuring the principles of the policy, it is essential to train healthcare teams. Basic content must be addressed, as Harada and Pedreira (2012) point out, stating that health professionals should, through education, develop skills and proficiency in using techniques and tools to support and improve their activities. This can reduce the likelihood of errors in practice, thereby broadening access to information on mental health policies and improving communication between users and professionals by providing clear, evidence-based information on mental health in primary care.

In researching similar materials, it was found that guidance on the topic is often too broad, as the materials are extensive, which can limit professionals' ability to quickly find relevant information in their daily routine. This represents an opportunity for innovation in this work. Therefore, the aim of this article is to present the development of an educational guide focused on mental health care in primary care. This will enable the provision of mental health knowledge to primary care professionals, promoting a practical and accessible approach to managing patients with mental disorders. Additionally, it will reflect on the new paradigms introduced by the Brazilian Psychiatric Reform and their application in primary care.

## II. Methodology

This study was developed through a narrative literature review and analysis of normative documents, such as ordinances and guidelines from the Ministry of Health. Keywords such as "Mental Health," "Primary Care," "Psychiatric Reform," and "Educational Guide" were used.

**Literature Review:** In order to understand the topics related to mental health, particularly in the context of user care in primary care, a narrative review was conducted using the following keywords: Mental Health in Primary Care, Brazilian Psychiatric Reform, and Educational Guide. Articles were found, classified, and used to support the information in the material. Additionally, the research included public documents, ordinances, laws, and decrees related to normative instruments and guidelines to be followed by public policy. Narrative reviews are broad and suitable for describing and discussing the development or "state of the art" of a subject from a theoretical or contextual perspective. This type of research plays a fundamental role in continuous education, as it provides qualitative information in a short period of time (ROTHER, 2007).

**Material Development:** The educational guide was organized through studies based on a literature review, conducted via a narrative review where relevant articles were found and classified to support the material's information. Additionally, the "Primary Care Guidebook," with a focus on mental health in Primary Care, developed by the Ministry of Health, was used as it provides the necessary guidelines for directing mental health practices in the community (BRASIL, 2013).

After defining the content, the guide was structured according to the criteria established in the Primary Care Guidebook - Mental Health. The script was developed by a professional specializing in marketing and design, who selected an educational model to convey the information previously developed by the researcher. The design includes attractive and easily understandable illustrations. The creation of the guide involved writing the content, producing illustrations, and formatting the layout. The transformation of scientific language was carried out to make it accessible to all readers, regardless of their educational level. The aim is for the guide to be easily understood, even by those with little or no formal education (DOAK; DOAK; ROOT, 1996). Once the illustrations were completed, the formatting, configuration, and layout of the pages were finalized.

## III. Results

The main product of this study was the creation of the educational guide titled "Mental Health Care: A Guide for Primary Care", available at the following link:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CtrGiDml99\\_Clcl\\_BoZ2anoB5VsvASFE/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CtrGiDml99_Clcl_BoZ2anoB5VsvASFE/view?usp=drive_link). The material was developed for use by health professionals in Basic Health Units (UBSS) and Psychosocial Care Centers (CAPS), providing practical information on how to identify and manage mental health situations. Additionally, the guide offers clear and illustrated instructions, facilitating daily use by professionals and promoting patient care safety.

## IV. Discussion

The implementation of mental health actions in primary care is crucial to ensure universal and equitable access to care. The guide proposed in this study aims to fill an important gap in the training of primary care professionals by providing a practical and accessible resource. The inclusion of mental health in the daily routine of Basic Health Units (UBSS) reinforces the principles of comprehensiveness and humanization of Brazil's Unified Health System (SUS), aligning with the guidelines of the Brazilian Psychiatric Reform.

Incorporating mental health actions as part of the practices of family health teams strengthens not only the SUS principles of universality, equity, and comprehensiveness but also contributes to the consolidation of the Brazilian Psychiatric Reform. Health professionals at various levels of care play a key role in sharing knowledge clearly and reliably.

It is important to highlight that the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing measures brought significant psychosocial impacts to the global community. In light of this, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by 25% (OPAS, 2022). Regarding the mental health consequences of COVID-19, the WHO noted that "The information we now have about the impact of COVID-19 on the world's mental health is just the tip of the iceberg" and warned that all countries should pay more attention to mental health and do a better job of supporting the mental health of their populations (OPAS, 2022).

Mental health is an emerging issue in Brazil and globally, emphasizing the need for preventive and health-promoting actions, as well as ensuring appropriate treatment in both primary care and specialized services. Understanding this issue expands our perspective and care towards individuals with mental health struggles, allowing us to realize that mental health goes beyond asylum-based practices often seen today. This educational guide aims to encourage professionals who face these demands daily to reflect on these crucial topics.

## V. Conclusion

The development of an educational guide on mental health for primary care professionals represents a significant step toward improving mental health care at the basic level. By providing clear guidance, the guide promotes the training and empowerment of professionals, contributing to the consolidation of mental health policies and the expansion of access to integrated and humanized care.

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