

COVID-19 and Schools Closure: Implications for School Nurses

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We are in a complex and massive crisis. In December 2019, in Wuhan, China, a new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) has emerged in humans along with the associated disease COVID-19. The disease is already widespread in 213 countries with about 1.9 million cases reported by April 16, 2020. Most schools around the world have implemented physical isolation measures to prevent the spread of the infection and minimize the impact of the novel virus, while the effectiveness of school measures in coronavirus outbreaks is still unclear (Bayham & Fenichel, 2020; Viner et al., 2020). Evidence suggests that most children with COVID-19 have mild symptoms or are asymptomatic (Lu et al., 2020). In addition, 91% of students in the world (more than 1.5 billion) are out of school, deprived of face-to-face classes (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020). Therefore, it seems clear that one of the greatest challenges from COVID-19 to children is outside health care settings.

Lifestyles: We know that compliance to 24-h movement behavior guidelines (physical activity, sedentary behavior, and sleep) is low (Janssen et al., 2017). In addition, the consumption of fruit and vegetables in children is below recommendations (Marinho et al., 2020). If these lifestyles are maintained or even impaired during confinement, similarly to a summer break (Wang et al., 2015), it is possible that overweight or obesity increase (Rundle et al., 2020).

On the other hand, many children may be deprived of essential goods, due to the absence of social support provided by schools such as free lunches or food at reduced prices (Joob & Wiwanitkit, 2020; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020).

Health Literacy: The knowledge and skills needed to find, understand, judge, and use the most relevant information on health and COVID-19, in order to make the best decisions about health, is considered essential. Beyond COVID-19 pandemic, there is an infodemic, with increased conspiracy theories, fake news, and misinformation (AFP Fact Check, 2020).

It is imperative that the school nurses maintain their involvement in schools and with families. They must remain available, vigilantes, working with students, families, and teachers in order to assure health for all. They are important

in clarifying, communicating, and educating effective science. Today, more than ever, school nurses need to make services available at a distance and offer tele-health/nursing services. School nurses can get involved in remote teaching, already provided by schools and embracing many students. However, families in a vulnerable situations, with no access to digital technologies, struggling to cope with different transitions (Armitage & Nellums, 2020; Joob & Wiwanitkit, 2020; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020) cannot be neglected. Nurses have a great responsibility in signaling these families and be the first support for their needs. Coordination with local/community health units is warranted. School nurses are important leaders in promoting health and preventing diseases not only in schools, but also outside them, always with children and families.

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