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VULNERABILITY TO STRESS AND PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ILLNESS

A.P. Amaral¹, A. Vaz Serra²

¹*Escola Superior de Tecnologia da Saúde de Coimbra - IPC*, ²*Serviço de Psiquiatria - Hospitais da Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal*

Aims: The purpose of this study was to examine whether vulnerability to stress is associated with physical and mental illness. We have two main goals:

1. Studying the importance of vulnerability to stress in the state of health of the individual;
2. Examining the effects of interactions between the life events, vulnerability to stress and social support in physical and mental symptoms.

Method: Multivariate analyses were used in a sample of 255 subjects of general population, evaluated in four different moments, spaced of three months. Regression analysis was used to identify the factors explaining the state of health, at every moment.

Results: The results suggest that vulnerability to stress emerge as the larger predictor of changes in health status of individuals in each moment of assessment. Its role is strongest regarding mental health. The longitudinal study suggest two interactions:

1. The interaction between life events and factor 1 of vulnerability to stress (perfectionism and low tolerance to frustration), which might explain the changes that occur in mental health.
2. The interaction between life events, the factor 7 of vulnerability to stress (deprivation of affection and rejection) and social support explains the changes that occur in physical health, along the study.

Conclusion: Findings suggest the importance of vulnerability to stress in physical and mental health.