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Aquí Nos Cuidamos launches a new mental health campaign [1]

Submitted by Mónica Ivelisse Feliú-Mójer [2] on 19 September 2021 - 8:46pm

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San Juan, PR – The precarious mental health situation in Puerto Rico has been worsened by the disasters and emergencies of the past four years, including Hurricanes Irma and Maria, earthquakes and the COVID-19 pandemic. Given this reality, the nonprofit organization Ciencia Puerto Rico (CienciaPR) [3] launched the public service campaign 'Salud mental es plenitud' (Mental health is plenitude or wholeness), as part of the educational toolkit Aquí Nos Cuidamos.

‘Salud mental es plenitud' seeks to help people take care of their mental and emotional health through practical, science-based tools that are relevant to their reality. The campaign consists of a series of free resources such as videos, audios, infographics, educational guides and social

media content that are easy to use and disseminate. All content is available to the general public, community and non-profit organizations, government and private entities, and the media through aquinoscuidamos.org/saludmental [4]. The educational initiative has the input and support of the Puerto Rico Psychological Association and the Puerto Rican Association of Professional Counseling.

"On a daily basis, Puerto Ricans live multiple situations that challenge our mental health: poverty, violence, personal circumstances, daily power outages, the economic crisis, and in the last four years, two major hurricanes, earthquakes and the pandemic," explained Mónica Feliú Mójer, scientist, communications director of CienciaPR and leader of the project. "Through multiple consultations with diverse marginalized communities in Puerto Rico over the past year, we identified that beyond COVID-19, one of the main concerns people have is mental health. That is why this new campaign contains techniques, resources and easy-to-follow tips, not only to take care of our mental health in these pandemic times, but at any time," added Feliú Mójer.

The content of 'Salud mental es plenitud' focuses on mental health care, healthy management of emotions and awareness of mental health disorders. The campaign includes a video that invites people to pause and be present through a breathing exercise. It also includes audios and sign language videos that address topics such as the importance of taking care of our mental health, depression, anxiety and stress, and suicide prevention.

‘Salud mental es plenitud' also includes a practical guide that presents affordable self-care strategies such as physical activity, entertainment, art therapy, meditation and sleep hygiene, and a resource guide for seeking professional help. These educational tools are complemented by pamphlets and a series of infographics that present everyday situations and strategies for managing emotions through dialogues.

It should be noted that the campaign also seeks to destigmatize seeking professional help and suffering from mental health conditions. "One of our key messages is that a mental health condition or simply seeking help is not synonymous with weakness. We know that mental health is as important as physical health and attending to it is essential to having a better quality of life. That is why the name of the campaign is ‘Salud mental es plenitud’. Because having emotional, psychological and social well-being is important to have a full life," emphasized Feliú Mójer.

"People are dealing with many emotions and with a complex reality. This campaign, like all the previous ones, seeks to be an accompaniment, an embrace; in this case to take care of mental health both at the individual, family and community level," highlighted Edmy Ayala Rosado, coordinator of Aquí Nos Cuidamos and specialist in science communication for CienciaPR.

"We have definitely lived through many experiences of drastic and stressful changes. That is why it is essential that more than ever we take care of our mental health. Sometimes we feel under a lot of pressure and we forget about ourselves. We must learn to rest… to live one day at a time," urged Migna Cruz, president of the Professional Counseling Association of Puerto Rico. "'Salud mental es plenitud' is a space to pause, reflect and recognize the importance of being gentle with ourselves and thus promote self-care, which is extremely essential for our integral well-being."

"Initiatives like this give us the possibility to work from prevention. Providing practical tools and educating people to have a greater awareness of health and wellness. The result of alliances between sectors and agencies, makes a greater reach viable and therefore a greater number of people benefit. Health is everyone's business, and this campaign highlights our commitment to our country," said Kevia Calderón Jorge, president-elect of the Puerto Rico Psychological Association.

On October 12 at 6:00 p.m., CienciaPR will hold a virtual community forum to present the campaign and discuss mental health care, emotion management and disorders with Cruz and Calderón Jorge. For more information visit aquinoscuidamos.org/eventos [5].

All content from 'Salud mental es plenitud' and the rest of Aquí Nos Cuidamos' campaigns are available for free download at aquinoscuidamos.org [4] and can be found and shared on social media under #AquiNosCuidamosPR. For more information, visit www.aquinoscuidamos.org [6] or www.cienciapr.org [3]. Also, you can follow CienciaPR on Facebook and Twitter as @CienciaPR and on Instagram as @ciencia.pr.

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About Ciencia Puerto Rico

Ciencia Puerto Rico (CienciaPR, www.cienciapr.org [3]) is a global community of more than 15,000 scientists, students, educators and allies who understand that science can empower people with the knowledge, capacity and agency to improve their lives and society. The organization leverages this rich and diverse community—the largest collective of people interested in science and Puerto Rico in the world—to democratize science, and transform science education and professional training for scientists. Since 2006, CienciaPR has successfully engaged and trained scientists, students, and educators, and created culturally relevant resources and educational experiences that improve students' attitudes and interests toward science and self-confidence in their scientific abilities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, CienciaPR has been making Puerto Rican experts visible, informing and educating the Puerto Rican public, and advocating for an evidence-based emergency response. CienciaPR's efforts over the past decade have garnered multiple recognitions, including being named a "Bright Spot" for Hispanic education by the White House in 2015 and a "Science Defender" by the Union of Concerned Scientists in 2018.

About Aquí Nos Cuidamos

Aquí Nos Cuidamos is a project of Ciencia Puerto Rico (CienciaPR) that promotes COVID-19 prevention and the well-being of vulnerable and marginalized communities in Puerto Rico through science and solidarity. Among its efforts is the Aquí Nos Cuidamos Toolkit, a series of public service campaigns about science and public health. The Toolkit is based on the most recent scientific data contextualized to the Puerto Rican reality and culture. It has been developed by experts in science, public health and communication, with input from community leaders and organizations, non-profit entities, and the deaf community. The Aquí Nos Cuidamos Toolkit comprises infographics, animations, videos, audios, and written materials that present science in accessible and practical ways. It includes topics such as the science of the coronavirus and COVID-19, prevention measures, alternatives for safe socializing, and the science behind vaccines, among others. All content in the Toolkit is available for free use at

www.aquinoscuidamos.org [6]. Aquí Nos Cuidamos has collaborative partnerships with organizations such as the Puerto Rico House of Representatives, the Puerto Rico Public Health Trust, Taller Salud, Mercy Corps, the Municipality of Villalba, the Puerto Rico Psychological Association, and the Puerto Rico Professional Counseling Association, among others; community outreach efforts such as workshops and a Community Ambassadors Program, which supports 10 Puerto Rican leaders in their community efforts. Recently, Aquí Nos Cuidamos was named a winner of the Falling Walls Engage competition, which recognizes projects that connect science with the public.

Tags:

- Aquí Nos Cuidamos [7]
- covid19-cienciaboricua [8]
- salud mental [9]

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