

LETTER TO THE EDITOR**Award from the Spanish Association of Pediatrics: collaborative work between Emergency Departments and Psychiatry in the prevention of pediatric self-injury and suicide****Azucena Díez Suárez***Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Unit. Department of Psychiatry. Clínica Universidad de Navarra. Pamplona, Navarra, Spain**Dear Editor,*

Recently, the article published in *Anales de Pediatría*, entitled “Self-injury and suicidal behavior in children and youth population: Learning from the pandemic”⁽¹⁾, received the award for the scientific publication that most contributed to the journal's impact index. This article was the result of a collaborative effort between pediatric emergency physicians, primary care providers, and child and adolescent psychiatrists.

This study was prompted by growing concern over the sharp rise in consultations for self-injury and suicidal behavior in pediatric emergency departments following the pandemic. The findings highlight the urgent need for all professionals working with adolescents to receive training in mental health and suicide prevention. The data are alarming: non-suicidal self-injury is estimated to affect 15–20% of adolescents⁽²⁾, and suicide is among the leading causes of death in this age group⁽³⁾. Both behaviors are increasing, underscoring the importance of early identification and timely intervention. Although suicide remains a taboo subject, silence will not solve the problem, on the contrary, open and informed conversations about suicide can save lives.

The rise in mental health-related emergencies calls for serious reflection and can be attributed to several factors. First, numerous studies involving diverse populations and social backgrounds have documented a deterioration in the mental health of children and adolescents⁽⁴⁾. Second, changes

in social and family dynamics have led many young people to adopt less healthy lifestyles—such as increased sedentary behavior, excessive screen time, and poor dietary habits—which further compromise their mental well-being. Third, there is growing awareness among young people and their families of the importance of mental health and the need to care for it actively. In this context, some emergencies involving self-harm or suicidal ideation may not reflect a mental illness per se, but rather acute emotional distress in the absence of adequate support⁽⁵⁾. Referring these cases to child and adolescent psychiatry teams is not always straightforward, nor is it necessary in every instance. Nonetheless, training in mental health is essential for accurately assessing these situations. Pediatricians, who are often the professionals most familiar with children and their families from the earliest stages of life, are particularly well-positioned to engage in risk assessment and, most importantly, prevention.

This award is yet another testament to the value of mutual understanding, coordination, and collaboration among the many professionals dedicated to the care of children and adolescents. It is a privilege for our entire team that, among all the possible topics featured in Spain's leading pediatrics journal, the mental health of young people has drawn the greatest attention. We hope this recognition encourages all pediatricians to reflect on the importance of training in child and adolescent psychiatry. We warmly invite you to take part in the training activities offered by the Spanish Association of Pediatrics, which remains deeply committed to promoting mental health among children and adolescents. Every child deserves the highest standard of care, always delivered with respect and compassion.

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