Health & Medicine

Psychiatrists to Study How College Students' Lives are Shaped by COVID-19

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|
Spring/Summer 2021



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The pandemic has turned everybody's lives upside down, and college students have made profound sacrifices. How will this experience affect them over the long term? Will it hinder their educational development? Or will it make them more resourceful, digitally savvy, and resilient?

A team of researchers at Columbia University Irving Medical Center and the New York State Psychiatric Institute has launched a study to find out. The group, which includes CUIMC psychiatrist Lawrence Amsel ’78CC, ’98PH and CUIMC psychiatric epidemiologists Michaeline Bresnahan ’99PH, Christina Hoven ’88PH, and Larkin McReynolds ’05PH, aims to survey thousands of US college students about how the pandemic has affected their lives — everything from their social habits to mental health to substance use — and how they are dealing with its challenges. By tracking the students for years to come, the researchers hope to identify coping strategies that some have used to keep themselves on the path to success. The study’s ultimate aim, the researchers say, is to help colleges and universities improve the mental-health programs they offer under ordinary circumstances as well as in times of crisis.

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