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By 2050 the world population over 60 years is estimated to be 2 billion. This implies the risk of the increase in the number of people with mental disorders which will soon overwhelm the mental health system in all countries. As an elderly patient suffering from mental health problems often has a combination of psychosocial, physical and social needs, there is a high prevalence of comorbidities in this vulnerable population.

The aging shift will require more and better strategies to ensure good mental health care for the older populations. Unfortunately, few mental health providers have had specialized training in providing care for older adults: no country today is able to educate enough professionals in old age mental health issues at the same speed than the population is ageing. The current configuration of services for the older will not cope with the consequences of the demographic shift. A way to increase the capacity of health systems to respond to this group needs is to increase the active role of Primary Care professionals.

These professionals are at a good position to manage all older persons health needs, including the comorbidities. Primary care practitioners can effectively master the diagnostic task in the early stages of the majority of mental disorders in the elderly, integrate them with their other health problems and identify what resources they can call upon.

This is a favorable cost/effective way to quickly increase the offer of comprehensive mental health care for this vulnerable population.