Mental health and lifestyle changes during the first month of lockdown in Greece

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Objective:
The current study aimed to explore the views and perceptions of Greek citizens regarding the impact of the pandemic on various health, mental health, and social behavior parameters.

Methods:
An online questionnaire was distributed in April 2020 to the general population in Greece, via university networks and popular social media.

Results:
A total of 1045 participants completed the questionnaire (men 34.0%; mean age 40.3 years) from all geographical regions of Greece. Satisfaction was high with the overall governmental response to the pandemic (71.0%). Lack of confidence was noted by many respondents regarding the national health system’s preparedness to meet the increased needs of patients during the crisis (44.7%) and mistrust was reported by a high percentage of participants for the media with the way they delivered the news (80.0%). “Fear” and “sleep disorders” were very prevalent psychological reactions to the pandemic (70.7%, 59.3% respectively). An increase was reported by many respondents regarding the use of new technologies (65.8%), social interactions via internet (54.8%), food consumption (32.7%) and care for personal health (31.0%). A decrease in sexual interaction with the partner (47.0%) and relaxation practices (31.0%) was reported by a significant number of respondents. Despite the huge impact on daily life, many participants (60.8%) reported their intention to comply with future restrictions, if necessary.

Conclusions:
The pandemic has greatly impacted various aspects of daily life. Policy makers need to reconsider future action upon considering the huge societal costs against perceived benefits.
Key messages:
- COVID-19 outbreak placed a substantial burden on the mental health of the Greek population.
- Identifying individuals most at risk of serious mental health conditions, seems vital.