Empowering Psychiatry in the Indian Scenario

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The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Mental health and mental illness are often difficult to define. When people are able to carry out their roles in society and their behavior is appropriate and adaptive, they are viewed as being healthy. Conversely, when a person fails to fulfill roles or carry out responsibilities, or his or her behavior is inappropriate, that person is viewed as ill. The culture of any society strongly influences its values & beliefs which in turn affects how health and illness are defined. What is viewed as acceptable and appropriate behavior in one society may be seen as maladaptive or inappropriate in another.

Mental Health and Indian Perspective

Mental Health has many components and is influenced by a wide variety of factors (Johnson, 1997):

- Autonomy & independence
- Maximizing one’s potential
- Tolerance of uncertainty
- Self esteem
- Mastery of the environment
- Reality orientation

Stress management

There are many individual factors that influence mental health:

Biological factors (sense of harmony in life, vitality, ability to find meaning in life, hardiness, spirituality and positive attitude).

Interpersonal factors (effective communication, helping others, intimacy, and maintaining a balance of separateness & connectedness).

Social/cultural factors (having a sense of community, access to adequate resources, tolerance to violence, & support of diversity among people).

As mental health professionals, we need to recognize and incorporate the various factors as mentioned in prevention, treatment & rehabilitation programmes concerning our patients. At the same time not much research is undertaken in these areas so as to have better planned interventions with scientific understanding. It is time that we all need to have concerted efforts by government, NGOs & private enterprises as well for addressing the need based mental health issues of the masses in Indian setting.

Extensive research needs to be done in the various areas regarding longitudinal & cross sectional aspects in given Indian community by the Mental Health Team.

Thus far the various mental health issues at Govt. level & state level are discussed in the document & disseminated to all concerned.

Now, the question is how well can we empower Psychiatry in Indian scenario. There are various areas where we need to have our own research base to authenticate the data, to utilize or customize for our people. This will enable us to have standardized care, care & rehabilitation approaches all over India. Areas of research predominantly are as follows:

- Genetic studies – longitudinal in nature need to be taken up.
- Developmental studies – with regard to behavioral aspects.
- Parenting issues.
- Impact of value education at scholastic level (e.g. impact of Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Baba Amte etc.)
- Cultural considerations in Indian context are very important from value inculcation point of view as they are transmitted through parents, teachers & elders to the children in a given society. These are tolerance, sympathy, forgiving, love for humanity etc.
- Spiritual influences on mental health (meaning of life & purpose for living)
- Family structure in current set up (Rural & Urban set up) – source of social
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Illness</th>
<th>India %</th>
<th>US %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen Morbidity</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural area</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban area</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schizophrenia</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
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<td>Substance abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neurosis</td>
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<td>13.0%</td>
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</table>

- Support
- Social network

**Incidence of Mental Ailments**

Recent survey reveals that the incidence of mental disorders in India is different as mentioned above.

In India, it is generally seen that the incidence of mental disorders is more in urban set up, females (35-45 yrs age) & low socio economic group. Children and elderly group cannot be overlooked due to modernization & globalization per se.

These figures & other factors discussed above reveal the less incidence of mental ailments in India when compared to US figures probably due to less stress, family support & cultural aspects.

**Prognosis of Mental Ailments**

World over, it is recognized that prognosis of mental ailments is better in India than the western countries. In 1973 WHO conducted an international pilot study of schizophrenia. Nine countries were included in this international project, India being one of them. The report revealed that the prognosis of schizophrenia was highest in India when compared to other eight countries. Five years after the treatment, 42% patients recovered completely whereas in Denmark & England only 6% F & 5% of the patients fully recovered respectively. Experts believe that better prognosis is due to strong family ties, agro based economy and interpersonal relationships with emotional bond.

**Futuristic View Point**

Mental health of the individuals mostly depends on the stress level in the immediate environment, meaning thereby that future of Indian mental health would be as per the situation prevailing at given point of time. Some of contemporary issues are:

- Change of life style due to advance technology
- Increased materialistic values
- Increased self-centered attitude leading to disintegration of family ties & emotional bonding
- Religion & spirituality: There is inverse relationship between increased materialism & spirituality in near future.

In conclusion, to empower psychiatry in India, we need to relate with Indian philosophy, tolerance, spirituality, the family bonding & social support. This in turn would support the individual’s mental health which would reflect a happy civilization.

**Reference**