MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A REVIEW

ABSTRACT:

India prides upon its youth but its youth is being tarnished by mental health ailments which are major shareholders of India's non-fatal diseases. It also is a major reason behind increasing substance abuse, suicide, acts of violence among Indian youth. If one person is suffering from depression or any other mental ailments then the patients family, friends, as well as his work colleagues all, are affected by it indirectly or directly, these ailments affect a person's capability to judge a situation as well as his capability It is an invisible illness but quite clearly visible among youth nowadays; yet still stigmatized so much that people often fear coming forward and getting help. Fortunately, some of the stigmas have been reduced but there are miles to go before people are as comfortable as they are about seeking help in other diseases. Mental illness is still treated as either untouchability or a reason to justify one's action. To overcome this problem, we need to educate the population right from an early age to create a safe environment to come out and report mental illness so that the treatment and counselling can start as soon as possible to save those who are being pushed into the depths of darkness and instability. But to address this problem completely we will also need competent psychologists and psychiatrists. Currently, the psychiatrist to patient ratio is 0.75 psychiatrists for 100,000 patients and the optimum is above 3 psychiatrists for 100,000 patients. According to experts, the current pandemic will lead to increase mental instability amongst the population leading to higher substance abuse, suicide, etc.

KEYWORDS: Depression; Anxiety; Stigma; Mental health; Psychiatrist; Psychologist; Covid-19.

INTRODUCTION:

Health, according to the World Health Organization, is "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity." [1] Therefore mental health is an integral part of health; it is the foundation of well-being and effective functioning of individuals [2]. Key factors to maintain mental well-being are prevention of mental disorders, treatment, and rehabilitation only by improving in all these areas we can achieve a society with good mental health and a healthy society as a whole. To promote mental health and reduce the cases of mental disorder we have to acknowleadge the presence of mental health; according to a study conducted in north indian region about perspective of

people towards mental health 60% of patients face derogatory responce from their family and 39.8% faces these issues from their friends and colleagues [x]. To treat those affected as early as possible, apart from just reducing the stigma we also need to boost the health infracture to handle these patients effectively. India also needs to improve the standards of its rehabilitation centers.

Around the globe, before the covid-19 pandemic, most people were not aware of the seriousness of the word pandemic, but now each and every one is aware and receptive to the information available. Similarly, if we go a few decades back people never considered mental health. In the 1940s WHO, defined health and introduced mental and social wellbeing as a part of health. But even today for most of the people, health is a mere absence of any pathological disease and deformity.

From the above, it is clear that mental health is an integral part of health, and awareness about the same is currently low but rising. Now moving to facts and numbers, India is ranked as the most depressed country in the world [3], around 14% of India's population has suffered from one or the other form of mental disorder in 2017. And if we look at a bigger picture out of 7900 million humans on earth around 450 million are suffering from mental disorders [4], [5]; which is 5.7 percent approximately. Now to give the reader a context, the total cases of covid-19 around the globe is 220 million i.e. 2.8 percent approximately. What we want to convey through these numbers is that we already are suffering from a pandemic of mental disorders and it is high time we acknowledge it and work towards creating a better world.

The main factors contributing to this mountain of mental disorders are: low income, disrupted work-life balance, low level of education, low doctor-patient ratio, the stigma associated with mental health, lower living standards, early exposure to social media, etc.

India launched its first national mental health policy in 2014 and revised the mental healthcare act in 2017. Its objectives were to provide universal, equitable, and affordable access to mental healthcare [6]. Yet even today only a few people are benefited from this and as this pandemic has added a huge number of mental disorders to Indian health care infrastructure, India needs to increase the awareness about the program and level up the infrastructure, and last but not least improve the doctor/consultant patient ratio. Now imagine a scenario where the psychiatrist himself/herself is suffering from a mental disorder then the current ratio will be even worse. As the load on psychiatrists will increase tremendously due to the pandemic and many of them would also have lost their loved ones, these things will collectively contribute to the increasing number of cases of mental health disorders among mental health experts too.

If failed to control mental health ailments the outcome will be worse than the current pandemic. The result of untreated mental disorders includes suicide, homicide, aggressive behavior, etc.

OBJECTIVES:

To provide the readers with-

1. An overview of mental health

2. Overview of various mental health disorders

3. Mental health of health care workers

4. Overview of the common methods available for the treatment of these disorders

MATERIALS AND METHOD:

PubMed and Google search engine were used to search the following key terms- "Covid-19", "mental illness", "doctor-patient ratio", "anxiety", "depression", "national mental health policy", "stigma associated with mental illness", "mental disorders among health care professionals", " mental health and doctors" and from the results of these search such as articles and news were selected and used for writing this review. Tools from Microsoft word were used to create the pie charts, tables, and other illustrations.

AN OVERVIEW OF MENTAL HEALTH:

The world health organisation (WHO) defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" [7]. In simpler terms, a person can be called mentally healthy when he/she can perform their day-to-day work normally and can also add something to their community while staying happy.

The key factors needed for maintaining mental stability are work-life balance, positive environment, stable social life, and periodic break from work, and last but not least, a person should not be overburdened with responsibilities or work.

The main issue with mental health problems is that the person suffering from it is not able to open up or communicate the issues they are facing with anyone because of the stigma associated with it. Often the person suffering from mental health issues doesn't even realize that they are suffering from it even after repeatedly being told so by their acquaintances. Even when someone tries to open up, they often are neglected or made fun of, and even if they are heard the other person in front of him/her generally are unaware of how to handle the situation, and just tries to uplift their mood temporarily rather than treating the root cause of the problem.

OVERVIEW OF VARIOUS MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS:

CHART 1. THE INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF DISEASES (ICD) 10 CHAPTER 5

F0	**ORGANIC, INCLUDING SYMPTOMATIC, MENTAL DISORDER**
F1	**MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS DUE TO USE OF PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES**
F2	**SCHIZOPHRENIA, SCHIZOTYPAL AND DELUSIONAL DISORDERS**
F3	**MOOD (AFFECTIVE) DISORDERS**
F4	**NEUROTIC, STRESS-RELATED, AND SOMATOFORM DISORDERS**
F5	**BEHAVIORAL SYNDROMES ASSOCIATED WITH PHYSIOLOGICAL DISTURBANCES AND PHYSICAL FACTORS**
F6	**DISORDERS OF PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOR IN ADULT PERSON**
F7	**MENTAL RETARDATION**
F8	**DISORDERS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT**
F9	**BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL DISORDERS WITH ONSET USUALLY OCCURRING IN CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE**

[8].

COMMON MENTAL DISORDERS:

1. DEPRESSION: It is a type of mood disorder. It is generally considered a combination of mood fluctuation and short-lived emotional responses to day-to-day events, but it is a much bigger term that can be described as depressed mood, feeling of lethargy, loss of interest, and enjoyment.

2. ANXIETY: It can be defined as intense excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations.

3. SCHIZOPHRENIA: It is a combination of hallucination, delusion, disordered thinking, and behavior.

4. BIPOLAR DISORDER: It is a brain disorder that causes changes in a person's mood, energy, and ability to function.

5. OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER: It is a condition in which people have recurring thoughts, ideas, or obsessions that make them feel driven to do something repeatedly.

6. POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER: It is seen in people who have witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, accident, or been to war, etc.

7. PHOBIA: It is an irrational and strong fear of something that poses little or no real danger.

## MENTAL HEALTH OF HEALTH CARE WORKERS:

May there be peace, war, or pandemic, hospital and health care workers play a crucial role in all these circumstances. The health care system and law and order i.e. police are golden assets for the nation. They are like the fuel for the nation, without health and law and order any nation's economy will collapse as there won't be a workforce available.

Yet, the professions with the highest suicide cases and the maximum number of mental health disorders are among health care workers and police. The irony is that when doctors suffer from a mental disorder are not able to get help due to various stigmas such as personal, professional, and institutional stigma.

The factors contributing to these high number of mental disorders among health care providers are workplace environment, inhuman working hours, lack of protective equipment, increased risk of infection to family members, and the recent pandemic resulted in even longer working hours and higher workload, with insufficient knowledge about the disease and horrifying visuals of people suffering and high death rates. As doctors have to see death up close almost every day and there are times when they can do nothing but ease the patient's pain, they face a lot of mental trauma on a daily basis. And in a country like India where violence against doctors is increasing day by day, the mental disorders will only go up if a safe and healthy environment with moderate work hours are not provided. Along with all this, patients also need to understand that doctors are not gods and they can't treat each and every disorder, there will be complications and these situations will never be in anyone's control. Therefore, patients should be a little humbler and cooperative with doctors.

According to a study conducted in India focusing mainly on health care providers in Maharashtra reveals that 47% of the people had symptoms of depression and 50% reported symptoms of anxiety. Among 197 health care professionals assessed 45% of them had low quality of life [9]. These numbers show the severity of the situation, as not much has changed even after two waves of covid-19 and the third wave is almost knocking on India's doors. In these difficult times, the health infrastructure needs not only funds but safety and support but on the contrary, they only receive the backlash of someone's death and violence in return for their selfless services towards their nation.

FEW COMMON METHODS AVAILABLE FOR THE TREATMENT OF THESE DISORDERS:
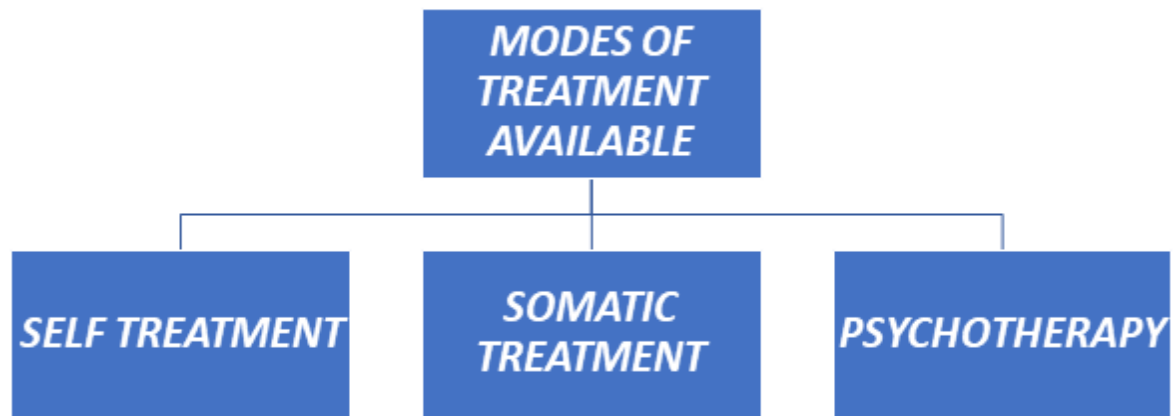
Self-treatment: It is useful in problems with less severity i.e. at the initial stage. It includes lifestyle changes such as exercise, reduced intake of alcohol, tobacco, and other intoxicants, as well as socializing with friends and family.

Psychotherapy: It is also known as talk therapy. Its main focus is to make a person realize the source of the problem and make them more emotionally aware. The basic requirement for psychotherapy is an empathetic and accepting atmosphere. Even people without any mental disorder find therapy helpful therefore it is often recommended for patients undertaking somatic treatment.

Somatic treatment: It includes external drugs and methods which help in modifying brain function. A few methods and drugs used can be generally classified into 2 types:

1. **Stimulants:** These elevate brain functions and are useful in depressive disorders.

2. **Depressants:** These are used to lower brain activity and are useful in excitatory disorders such as mania.

DISCUSSION:

The failure to acknowledge the existence of mental health ailments by society is a prime example, that the understanding of the topic of mental health is very poor in society. The

efforts of government are falling short as the number of mental health experts in India is very low, due to which there is not much that the government can do, it can only start preparing for future by promoting mental health and at the same time increase the no of mental health experts as well as develop the infrastructure needed for management of mental health ailments. The corporate world has also started to work towards the mental stability of their employees and only with the combined efforts of government and the community a mentally stable world is possible. Once the stigma is reduced then only the actual number of cases will present themselves and hence gradually be managed. Counselling also needs to be promoted and number of councillor should also be increased.

CONCLUSION:

To conclude, with the Covid-19 going on, the number of mental health issues will only increase as a large sum of the population have lost their jobs, many have lost their loved ones and were not even able to do their last rites properly, and those who were not severely affected by the illness and economic problems directly will surely be affected by the horrific visuals of the country and the world as a whole. Floating dead bodies in rivers, mass cremations, non-availability of medicines or hospital beds are just the tip of the iceberg. There are many difficulties and horrific visuals created due to the pandemic, all this will only lead to an increased number of mentally unstable people with PTSD and other mental disorders.

Everyone has seen the scenario where medical care was not available due to the heavy burden on our health system, similar burden is imposed by mental disorders but the only difference between COVID and this scenario is that COVID is more fatal, but mental disorders leave the person alive without the will to live. If appropriate steps are not taken to prevent and stop the boom of cases of mental disorder then the world is just a few inches away from another deadly pandemic which we won't be able to control with any vaccine.

As in 2017 the president of India, Ram Nath Kovind said "India does not simply have a mental health challenge... it is facing a possible mental health epidemic," [10] He also addressed that there is a shortage of mental health professionals in the country. The ideal ratio is above 3 and India's current ratio is 0.75. Even if India wants to fight against this deadly manifestation, it can't as the mental health professionals who are the nation's weapons against mental disorders are themselves suffering from the same due to the excessive and inhuman burden on the Indian healthcare infrastructure[11-15].

To fight this situation, India needs to create more mental health experts but first, it needs to develop an accepting and empathic environment, which will help the people to open up and thus reduce the number of cases that go unreported. In creating an accepting environment we need nationwide campaign to reduce the stigma and to collect the feedback of these campaigns, we also need extensive research in the area of mental health and its associated areas. The primary motive of the campaign should be to help people acknowledge the existence of mental health and mental health ailments. The majority of patients constantly face a lot of criticism and comments which stops them from undergoing treatment. These

researches not only help to provide points around which a better policy can be formed and act as feedback but also helps by finding out various new methods and factors which affect mental health or simply helps understand the topic better.

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