

PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH

Psychiatric Mental Health

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Mental illnesses, according to the American Psychiatric Association, are health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking or behavior (or a combination of these). Mental illnesses are associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities.

The mystery of how our brain works have always amazed me. I am a believer that each one of us has a little cookoo trait within us, just on different levels. One person may have this as a trait and deals with it like a normal person while another person may turn this trait into a disorder wherein further intervention and management must be provided. Although a lot of people suffer from mental illness, there is still a massive stigma attached to it. For this reason, patients are reluctant to seek medical advice and treatment. They do not even want to talk about it or do not want to accept that they have it.

In our modern times, the acceptance of mental illness has improved compared to how it was perceived a long time ago. Before, some families even hide their relatives in asylums because of the humiliation attached to having mental disorders. Now, we try our best to treat them as normal as possible and offer them the best quality of life that they deserve; although the stigma attached to it is still there, only subtle.

I came from a third world country where healthcare is very expensive. When I was a child, that was in the 80s, I remember we have a neighbor with three children who are mentally ill. This family was really financially challenged. They can barely afford food, much more any treatment for their children. Honestly, I vividly remember them living like prisoners. Their mother would lock them individually on a small room with only a mat on the floor. They were all in their teens. Sometimes, my brothers and I would talk to them and they seem normal, but other times, they would be shouting and banging their hands on the walls. They are not let out of their

rooms because they can be very violent and would throw rocks on passers by. Their mother who is a widow would just leave them locked up and let neighbor keep an eye on them when she goes to work (she was a laundry woman who would wash clothes of affluent families). During that time, I was around 8 or 9 years old and have no understanding of this situation. I just remember that my parents would ask me to bring some rice and canned goods to this family when my father gets some bonus money from his work. The neighborhood pitched in for what little help they can give to this family. As I grew up, I realized that these unfortunate mentally ill neighbors of ours will never get better because they never had treatment. They all have schizophrenia and their uncle also has it but he was sent to an asylum. Research has shown that genetics can be an important contributing factor for the development of schizophrenia.

Schizophrenia is one of the more popular amongst all mental illness because they are the ones that manifests symptoms that are hard to miss. However, there are more common mental illness present in our families, our friends, or even us. Some are just so mild that the symptoms have limited effect on their daily life or the life of people around us.

At the end of this module, I would like to learn the different ways to deal with people who have mild mental illness such as anxiety disorder especially if they are your close friends. I also want to be familiar with the different treatment modalities and advancement that has developed in recent years for the treatment of schizophrenia. Also, is psychotherapy something we as future nurses can use this in dealing with our patients? I think it is also important to know the dangers that nurses are facing when interacting with psychiatric patients and what are the ways to protect ourselves from these types of patients.

I am very excited to learn new exciting things in this module and probably discover any hidden craziness I have myself.

