

Inclusion of Common Mental Disorders in Undergraduate Teaching

Sobia Haqqi*

Associate Professor and Consultant Psychiatrist, Sir Syed College of Health Sciences for Girls, Karachi, Pakistan

***Corresponding Author:** Sobia Haqqi, Associate Professor and Consultant Psychiatrist, Sir Syed College of Medical Sciences for Girls, Karachi, Pakistan.

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A 21 year old girl was brought to the emergency room of a tertiary care hospital in the early hours of a day, in Karachi. The girl and her family had travelled for 18 hours by road to reach the destination. Belonging to a tribal background with minimal education, the girl was not able to explain her symptoms to the doctor on duty. Her base line work up and initial General Physical and Systemic Examination were not indicative of a gross medical or surgical etiology. Fortunately, the doctor on call was able to take a detailed history and identified psycho-social stressors. The patient was referred to the Psychiatrist on-call for a prompt management.

This can be one of the many examples of patients visiting healthcare facilities and sometimes not being able to seek the required treatment. Sometimes, a patient suffering from a Psychiatric Disorder can take years to reach a mental health care facility or a mental health care provider. [1]

Former Capital and a megacity, Karachi, covers about 3527 sq. Kms. of land alongside the Coastal Lines of the Province of Sindh. With a population of 9856318 (as per an old census), males comprise about 53.83% and the male to female ratio is 116 males per 100 females. The average household is of 6.7 members and around 94% citizens reside in the urban designated areas of the city. The literacy rate is about 67.4%. [2]

With the average annual growth rate of about 3.6%, Karachi has yet to give Health Care and health Education a priority. Although the efforts by the PMDC (Pakistan Medical and Dental Council) have shown positive results. From the establishment of new Medical Colleges, to upgrading the Teaching hospitals and Training Facilities, the regulatory body has been successful in streamlining the Professional Training Programs. [3]

Mental Health Disorders rank among the top leading causes of disability globally. [4] The burden on the family and carers of a psychiatric patient is huge. However, Stigma towards help seeking remains a barrier in early identification and treatment of Patients suffering from Psychiatric Disorders. [5]

The author has had the good opportunity to work in a medical college where the undergraduate curricula is highly focused on the professional development. With the kind approval of the higher authorities, lectures on Common Mental Disorders have been integrated into the curricula. This can be a step towards creating awareness for Psychiatry and Psychiatric Disorders. This can also pave way in guiding the undergraduates for possible psychiatry residency training and pursuing psychiatry as a Career.

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