

REVAMPING MENTAL HEALTH

Sound investment needed for sound mind



STAR HEALTH DESK

One in four people will require mental healthcare at some point in their lives, but in many countries — only two per cent of all health sector resources are invested in mental health services. About 80 percent of people with serious mental disorders living in low and middle income countries like Bangladesh do not receive mental health services they need. Experts urge to increase investment in mental health to bridge the substantial gap

between the burden caused by mental health disorders and the resources available to prevent and treat them.

The figures from the World Health Organisation (WHO) Mental Health Atlas 2011 indicate that average global spending on mental health is less than US\$3 per capita per year, and as little as 25 cents per person per year in low-income countries.

Today, nearly 70 per cent of mental health spending goes to the institutions. If countries spent more at the primary care level, they would be able to reach more

people, and start to address problems early enough to reduce the need for expensive hospital care, suggested experts from WHO.

The Atlas highlights other imbalances. Good mental health services focus equally on providing patients with a combination of medicines and psycho-social care. In lower income countries, however, shortages of resources and skills often result in patients only being treated with medicines. The lack of psycho-social care reduces the effectiveness of the treatment. Resources to treat and pre-

vent mental disorders remain grossly insufficient. Statistics from WHO reveals that almost half of the world's population lives in a country where, on average, there is one psychiatrist (or less) to serve 200,000 people and many low-income countries have less than one mental health specialist per one million population.

Mental health policies should not be solely concerned with mental disorders, but should also recognise and address the broader issues which promote mental health. This includes

mainstreaming mental health promotion into policies and programmes in government and business sectors including education, labour, justice, transport, environment, housing, and welfare, as well as the health sector.

Mental health is an integral and essential component of health and investing in mental health is crucial. A populous country like Bangladesh should prepare to make rapid advancements in scaling up care through its national health programmes.

Source: World Health Organisation

ERGONOMICS

How to stay healthy in work environment

DOLILUR RAHMAN

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (muscle, bone and joint), briefly called MSDs comprise a significant portion of workplace injuries and huge economic and physical burden. These disorders include pain and discomfort, unusual sensations like (burning, tingling and numbness), stiffness, fatigue and muscle weakness, tension headache etc. Sometimes, it becomes so severe that people have to leave their jobs. However, we can avoid or manage the conditions by following simple guideline.

The rapid changes of office design and technology from traditional to modern corporate style makes people inactive resulting in MSDs. Prolonged and repeated bad posture in front of computers during long office hour, in meeting after meeting, surfing the Internet and using laptops are usually the reasons behind it.

Here are some tips to help you prevent office work related MSDs.

- Confirm appropriate height adjustment of chair, table and computer screen in relation to your body, support your back completely and comfortably. Shoulders and wrists should be relaxed during use of keyboard and mouse. Adjust the level of computer screen satisfying your convenience; screen should be one arm length away, allowing sufficient room to move knees and legs under the desk. You can use foot rest to provide support.

- Laptop screens and keyboards cannot be optimally adjusted and consistent use of these for intense work is not recommended.

- Take a break for 5-10 minutes for every 2 to 3 hours spent at a workstation.

- Break up keyboarding tasks by doing other tasks that involve moving around or changing body position.

- Moving the whole forearm and not just the wrist side to side ensure better blood flow to the muscles and prevents fatigue while using mouse.

- Stand when talking on the telephone; remain standing when talking to other staff.

- Telephone should be on non-dominant side and avoid prolong holding the handset between the shoulder and ear to prevent excessive muscular tension in the shoulder and neck.

- Try to avoid intercom inside of office if within easy reach.

- Try to walk and use stairs instead of lift in the office if possible.

- Come and go from office by walking if it is within 1 or half hour distance.

- Avoid eating habits in the desk.
- Practice stretching and relaxation.

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HEALTH bulletin

Stem cell to avoid need of liver transplant

British scientists have developed a new stem cell technique for growing working liver cells which could eventually avoid the need for costly and risky liver transplants. A team of researchers led by the Sanger Institute and the University of Cambridge used cutting-edge methods to correct a genetic mutation in stem cells derived from a patient's skin cells, and then grew them into fresh liver cells.

Raw vegetables and fruit counteract heart risk genes

People who are genetically susceptible to heart diseases can lower their risk by eating plenty of fruit and raw vegetables, a study published in Plos Medicine journal suggests.

Vitamins linked with higher death risk in older women

When it comes to vitamins, it appears you could have too much of a good thing, say researchers who report a link between their use and higher death rates among older women in Archives of Internal Medicine. Experts have suspected for some time that supplements may only be beneficial if a person is deficient in a nutrient.



EXPERT EYE

Shaping eye care services for children



Prof Dr M A Muhiit

Childhood blindness is still a significant problem for a developing country like Bangladesh. The eye care services for children are still

inadequate, disproportionately distributed. There is a dire need to integrate childhood blindness into health system work frame.

Many children in Bangladesh are afflicted with blindness due to bilateral cataract, complications of cataract surgery, retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), refractive error, vitamin A deficiency and measles.

Increased capacity for finding blind children, safe surgery and care are extremely inadequate in many areas. Sometimes, the facilities and ophthalmological team are in place but underutilised due to many reasons.

Many causes of childhood blindness are either preventable or treatable. Cataract is completely treatable with cost effective and safe surgery if we can intervene timely. But it is sometimes logistically complex to identify the children who will benefit the most from surgery and reliably transport them to a treatment center.



Neonatal screening for cataract can be done by paediatricians and obstetricians to detect at the earliest phase. Incorporating childhood blindness in maternal and child health is now essential to combat childhood blindness from avoidable causes like cataract, vitamin A deficiency, ROP.

Certain studies suggest that refractive errors are more prevalent in children in Asian countries than in other regions, and myopia (short sightedness) is the commonest refractive error in older children. High proportion of children with refractive error are found in school screening programmes. Again, when

these children are provided spectacles, many of them do not wear them. Treating refractive errors need little logistic support and one of the cheapest tools — just a spectacle. It should be include in school health programme and training for school teacher to detect refractive error is a important way to reduce the burden.

The elimination of avoidable childhood blindness is a priority than those for adults. Shaping eye care services for children will shape their future as well as the nation.

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Speakers are seen in a CME seminar titled "Sleep Apnoea: The Silent Killer" organised by ENT Department of Sir Salimullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital, Dhaka.

Knowing for better living

In Bangladesh . . .

8 million people suffer from allergy!

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Avoid allergic chemical cleaners

Keep your pets outdoor if possible

Keep pollen outside

Take a bath or shower before bedtime

Consult your Doctor



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