

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Coping with horrible flashback

DR MUNTASIR MARUF

Savar tragedy is a distressing, horrible and scary experience for us. Many lives have been lost, many survive only to suffer with permanent disabilities. After such traumatic experiences, nearly everyone will have the symptoms of stress and grief for the first month which is a natural grieving process. Over a few weeks, stress symptoms in most people will start to disappear.

Not everyone is so lucky. Some will still experience those symptoms and they cannot come to terms with what has happened. When the symptoms of a traumatic stress become persistent for long, it is called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

PTSD is a kind of anxiety disorder that can be developed after exposure to one or more traumatic events that threatened or caused grave physical harm. Such events can include combat or military exposure, terrorist attacks, serious accidents, such as a car wreck, natural disasters like fire, tornado, hurricane, flood, earthquake, violent physical assault, kidnaping, emotional or sexual assault or abuse, paranormal events or getting a diagnosis of a life-threatening illness.

Witnessing traumatic experiences or learning about these experiences may also cause the development of PTSD symptoms. Emergency responders who



PHOTO: COURTESY

Emergency medical response team from Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital supporting the victims of collapsed Rana Plaza at Savar

help victims during traumatic events, police, fire brigade, ambulance workers and even the journalists covering the incidents are also at risk.

The symptoms of PTSD usually appear within 6 months of a traumatic event. But there are examples where PTSD developed years later. Symptoms of PTSD can be terrifying. They may disrupt one's life and make it hard to continue with one's daily activities. Horrifying memories of the traumatic event can come back at any time.

Sufferers of PTSD find themselves reliving the event, over and over. This can happen both as a flashback in the day and as nightmares during sleep. These can be so realistic that they may feel the same emotions and physical sensations of what happened before.

Some sufferers deal with the pain of their feelings by trying to feel nothing at all — by becoming emotionally numb. Some PTSD sufferers may be jittery or always alert and on the lookout for danger. They cannot get relaxed, suddenly

become angry or irritable, feel anxious, have trouble concentrating and find it hard to sleep. This is known as hyperarousal.

Having PTSD, dealing with the past can be hard. But treatment can help to get better. PTSD is commonly treated using a combination of psychotherapy and medications. Basic counselling for PTSD includes education about the condition and provision of safety and support.

Early intervention after a traumatic incident, known as Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is used to attempt to reduce traumatic effects of an incident and potentially prevent a full-blown occurrence of PTSD.

Help yourself

If you go through overwhelming frightening experiences, help yourself to prevent PTSD:

- Share the incidence with trusted ones
- Get back to your usual routine and work
- Spend leisure times with family and friends
- Have regular meal and exercise
- Try relaxation techniques
- Visit the area where the traumatic event happened
- Keep life as normal as possible
- Consult with mental health specialist

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HEALTH INFORMATICS

Why do we need to invest in health informatics

DR ALI HAIDER RASHIDEE

Many clinical, business and national information related challenges in healthcare can now be efficiently and effectively addressed using Healthcare Information and Communication technology (HICT).

There are many direct clinical quality challenges as well as some other extremely important quality and universal care challenges that could be solved using HICT. It plays an ever-greater role in the care of patients and healthy people. Some components of HICT have significantly improved the quality of health care and reduced medical errors.

Continuing to use paper records places patients at risk for harm and less than optimal management and substantially constrain any country's ability to reform health care.

In Bangladesh, the general understanding is that healthcare quality is not good, but it would certainly intrigue our conscientious minds if we knew the magnitude quantitatively. Rather than debating, it is more important to learn from others and do what we need to do to improve ourselves measurably while being realistic.

There is no silver-bullet, but many challenges of health sector and more can be mitigated to a great extent by HCIT in an eHealth environment.

Bangladesh can also achieve overall efficiency and effectiveness by implementation of HICT. Acting on these is imperative and urgent. Should we be far behind in this revolution?

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HEALTH TIPS

Strengthen your bones

Working to build up bone strength will benefit you later in life, especially into your senior years when bone density naturally decreases. The Harvard School of Public Health offers these suggestions for building stronger, healthier bones:

- Eat a variety of calcium-rich foods, including more than just dairy. Broccoli and leafy green vegetables, tofu and beans are rich sources of calcium.
- Get plenty of vitamin D, and take a supplement if you are not getting enough from natural sunlight and food sources.
- Exercise regularly, engaging in weight-bearing exercises such as jogging or walking.
- Watch your intake of vitamin A, as it can weaken bones.



/StarHealthBD

HEALTH bulletin

Mediterranean diet might help stave off dementia

Eating fish, chicken, olive oil and other foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids while staying away from meats and dairy — the so-called Mediterranean diet — may help older adults keep their memory and thinking skills sharp, a large new U.S. study published in Neurology suggests.

Smoking women may have higher risk for rheumatoid arthritis

Smokers and former smokers are at increased risk for rheumatoid arthritis, according to the study, which was published in the journal Arthritis Research & Therapy.



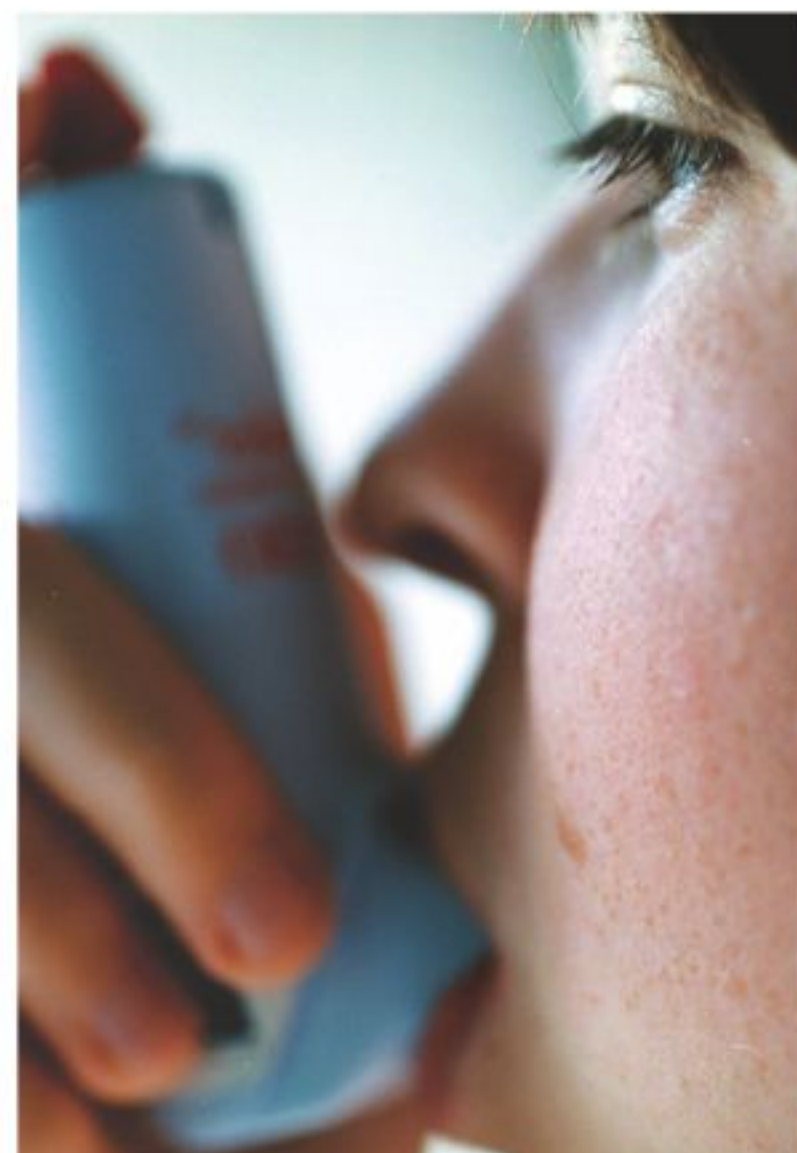
Tackling the rising trend of Asthma

The rapid rising trend of Asthma is now considered a cause for concern in Bangladesh. About 10 million people in Bangladesh have been suffering from Asthma that rose from 7 million in 2002. Experts identified air pollution and increasing use of some chemicals as two main reasons behind the dramatic increase.

The more worrying aspect of the disease is that it accounts for about 1 in every 250 deaths worldwide and 90% of these deaths are preventable. Most deaths are due to delay in seeking help and sub-optimal long-term treatment strategies due to the lack of education and awareness about the disease.

In Bangladesh, dust from construction activities and digging of roads covers the whole city and smoke emitted by automobiles and factories mixes with fog and creates poisonous smog. All these factors are responsible for the rise in the number of Asthma patients in the city.

The low-income and illiterate groups are more vulnerable to Asthma attacks than people belonging to the high-income group and are educated.



Asthma is a chronic condition that cannot be prevented or cured, but managed. However, asthma attacks may commonly be prevented if the factors that trigger them are identified and taken care of. People who have asthma should give up smoking.

Often, attacks triggered by physical exercise can be averted by taking medication beforehand. When

dust and allergens are the problem, air filters, air conditioners and other types of barriers can help considerably. For people whose asthma is stimulated by allergies, desensitisation through the use of allergy shots may prevent attacks.

Recently, several studies show that glass cleaners, air fresheners, Vitamin D deficiency have been found to be a potent risk factor for Asthma.

Awareness is key to tackle Asthma. People should learn and understand what triggers Asthma and how we can effectively control it with medication. In order to focus on initiatives to improve understanding of this condition, World Asthma Day is going to be observed on May 7 this year with the theme — *You can control your Asthma*. It signifies that the wheel is at our hands and we have to drive us safe and help live healthy even with Asthma.

The write up is compiled by Dr Mohammad Azizur Rahman, Consultant Pulmonologist, Probin Hospital, Agargaon, Dhaka.

Knowing for better living

You can reduce **30%** risk of cancer death!

Maintain a healthy body weight

Exercise regularly

Avoid tobacco use

Take lots of vegetables & fruits

Avoid alcohol use



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