

# Living a healthier life with Schizophrenia

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Schizophrenia is a major mental disorder that affects approximately 26 million people worldwide. People with this condition have hallucination (like hearing voices from invisible persons, unusual smell or perception on skin), delusions (like false belief about somebody do harm to them), thought withdrawal, feeling that controlled by others. They may also have sleep disorders, marked unusual behaviour, feelings that are blunted or seem inconsistent to others, speech that is difficult to follow, marked preoccupation with unusual ideas, poor self care, ideas of reference like people on TV talking to them, persistent feelings of unreality etc.

A national survey done from 2003 to 2005 by National Institute of Mental Health revealed that 6 per thousand adults in Bangladesh are suffering from Schizophrenia. But the awareness and mental health support for these people are very poor in the country.

In order to raise awareness of the illness and focus on recovery, World Mental Health Day which has been observed on October 10,



2014 to shed light on those *Living with Schizophrenia* — from those who face every day of their lives with it, to their families, friends, doctors and society as a whole.

Schizophrenia is a chronic illness. After getting proper treatment some 25% of people with Schizophrenia do recover fully, a further 25-35% improve considerably and live relatively

independent lives, some 20% improve but need extensive support and between 10 and 15% remain unimproved in hospitals. A further 10-15% die prematurely, mostly by suicide.

Like any mental illness, there are some misconceptions in Bangladesh regarding Schizophrenia. A good number of people rush to the spiritual

healers and accepted treatment which are devoid of any scientific components like holy water, tabiz and other indigenous methods. Another group of people who are educated and biased by intentional publicity of counselling that excludes rejection of any medication as a part of treatment and go for the talk therapy which has no or little role in the

management of Schizophrenia.

Counselling has very effective role in a large group of mental disorders, but in case of Schizophrenia, where the brain has gone to a definite biochemical change — drugs are the prime approach of treatment. Stopping the drugs for Schizophrenic patients for the sake of counselling may create any catastrophe like suicide. So, regular medication is a must for the effective management of Schizophrenia and patients need to attain in occupational therapy which may help them remain functionally active.

The key message of this day was Schizophrenia is a condition which can be managed by appropriate medication with supportive treatment, social care and with doors opening to social inclusion through the ignorance of pre-judging and stigma. We all should have an empathetic view towards patients with mental illness and help build a stronger support system so that everyone can live a healthy and productive life.

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NOBEL IN MEDICINE



John O'Keefe May-Britt Moser Edward I Moser

## Discovering brain's GPS

Three scientists, including a husband-and-wife team, have been awarded this year's Nobel Prize in medicine for deciphering the mechanism in the brain that allows us to find our way around.

The three winners of the world's most coveted medical research prize are John O'Keefe, who holds both U.S. and British citizenship and is director of the Sainsbury Wellcome Center in Neural Circuits and Behaviour at University College London; May-Britt Moser, a professor of neuroscience at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and Edward I Moser of the same university.

According to a statement, this year's laureates have discovered a positioning system in the brain called "inner GPS" that makes it possible to orient ourselves in space, demonstrating a cellular basis for higher cognitive function- solved a problem that has occupied philosophers and scientists for centuries.

For hundreds of years, questions about how humans understand their location in their environment, and how they develop a sense of distance, have intrigued scientists and philosophers alike. It was 20th-century advances in psychology and neuroscience that allowed researchers to probe their questions experimentally.

The Nobel winners' work provides such a fundamental insight into the brain that many neuroscientists are hopeful that the discovery will one day help us find treatments for a host of neurological conditions.

## HEALTH bulletin

### Kids on tight schedules may lose out



Which approach to parenting is best: tiger mom or free range? A new study published recently in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology*, suggests that kids may need a little more latitude with their free time instead of having their days packed with lessons, sports and structured activities.

Experts encouraged parents to offer children a balance between some structured time, where they can learn a specific skill, and some free time.

### Calcium supplements don't raise women's heart risks

In the wake of concerns that calcium supplements increase the risk for heart attack or stroke, a large, new U.S. study published in *Osteoporosis International* offers women and their doctors some reassurance.

Researchers from Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston found that these supplements are safe in terms of heart health.

Millions of women take calcium supplements in an attempt to boost bone strength, especially after menopause when the risk of fractures increases. This is so even though experts generally recommend that calcium come from diet rather than supplements.

## Preventing age related muscle loss — Sarcopenia

Sarcopenia is a condition leading to the age-related loss of muscle mass, strength which in turn affects balance, gait and overall ability to perform tasks of daily living. Scientists have long believed muscle loss and others signs associated with aging are an inevitable process. However, researchers are now looking for ways in which we can slow the aging process, specifically in relation to loss of muscle mass and strength.

According to the population projections in different countries, the percentage of 65 years of age or older is increasing randomly. Millions of people will become weak and frail as they age due to severe loss of muscle mass. As humans age, the force-generating capacity or strength of their skeletal muscles is reduced. As a result, many older people experience difficulty in performing their activities of daily living and instrumental activities.

Although Sarcopenia is mostly seen in people who are inactive, the fact that it also occurs in people who stay physically active throughout life. People who are physically inactive can lose as much as 3% to 5% of their muscle mass per decade after age 30.

Current research is finding that the development of Sarcopenia is a multifactorial process. Many factors, including physical inactivity, motor-unit remodelling, decreased hormone levels, decreased protein synthesis, inadequate intake of calories may all contribute to Sarcopenia.



Fortunately, Sarcopenia is partly reversible with appropriate exercise interventions. The primary treatment for Sarcopenia is exercise. Specifically, resistance training or strength training exercise that increase muscle strength and endurance with weights or resistance bands have been shown to be useful for both the prevention and treatment of Sarcopenia.

Resistance training has been reported to positively influence the neuromuscular system, hormone concentrations and protein synthesis rate. Research has shown that a programme of progressive resistance training exercises can increase protein synthesis rates in older adults as little as two weeks. Strength training promotes mobility, enhances fitness and improves muscles and bones health.

Optimising muscle mass helps improve strength, functionality and overall health and well-being, even into advanced age.

For optimal benefits with minimal risk of injury, the proper number, intensity and frequency of resistance exercise is important. For that reason, you should work with an experienced physiotherapist to develop an exercise plan.

Although drug therapy is not the preferred treatment for Sarcopenia, a few medications are under investigation. Several nutrients, including creatine, vitamin D and whey protein have shown great promise in combating Sarcopenia.

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### Health Tips

## Preparing for potty training

Preparing for the challenges of potty training can make achieving the milestone easier. The American Academy of Paediatrics offers the following suggestions to prepare for potty training:

- Offer plenty of praise and be very positive, even for the smallest progress.
- Create consistent expectations and communicate them clearly to your child.
- Understand that you may need to change tactics as your child's needs, skills and behaviours change. Stay involved and pay attention to techniques that are no longer working.
- Enjoy moments with your child that are funny and sweet, rather than feeling frustrated. Take heart knowing that your child will eventually learn to use the potty.



/StarHealthBD

## Knowing for better living

People with diabetes are more likely to have a **heart attack** or **stroke** than people who do not have diabetes.

Control your diabetes

Maintain a healthy diet

Control your body weight

Avoid smoking

Exercise regularly

Consult your Doctor



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