

## Combating oral diseases through tobacco harm reduction

Leading international health experts unveiled a pioneering four-point plan to address the global crisis of oral diseases, which afflict more than 3.5 billion people worldwide.

Their landmark report, launched at a conference of highly regarded health professionals in London, provides a bold vision for reducing tobacco-related oral diseases by promoting safer alternatives and integrating tobacco harm reduction (THR) strategies into public health frameworks.

The report, Transforming Oral Health for All: The Case of Tobacco Harm Reduction, sets out four strategic objectives.

**Encouraging risk-proportionate regulation:** Governments should revise regulations and tax policies to increase access to safer, smoke-free nicotine alternatives while restricting combustible tobacco products, encouraging people who smoke to switch, and reducing the global burden of tobacco-related oral diseases.

**Activating oral health professionals:** Oral health professionals, especially dentists and hygienists, are crucial in educating patients about tobacco harm reduction. Providing them with proper training enables them to guide patients away from smoking-related oral diseases.

**Strengthening alliances and consumer representation:** The report advocates for forming science-based consumer groups and collaborations among healthcare providers, NGOs, and the private sector to amplify voices affected by tobacco-related diseases and support evidence-based policy reforms.

**Investment in research and local science:** The report urges increased investment in research to understand tobacco harm reduction's impact on oral health, advancing knowledge on safer smoke-free nicotine products while protecting youth from tobacco use.



# Mental health disorders should not be stigmatised or seen as a curse

SALMA AKTAR PRIYO

Mental health disorders affect millions of people worldwide, yet they remain one of the most misunderstood aspects of human health. Too often, these conditions are stigmatised or dismissed as curses, leading to discrimination, neglect, and a lack of proper care. Such perceptions not only harm individuals but also hinder societal progress. The time has come to address this stigma and view mental health with the same importance as physical well-being.

Neglecting mental health carries dire consequences. Individuals who suffer from untreated mental disorders often experience declining physical health, as chronic stress exacerbates conditions like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Social isolation is another significant outcome, as stigma prevents people from seeking help, leaving them alienated and hopeless.

This neglect also contributes to the high global suicide rate, with nearly 800,000 deaths annually, many of which could have been prevented with timely intervention. In Bangladesh, suicide remains a pressing issue, with a rate of 7.8 per 100,000 people. Beyond the personal toll, the neglect of mental health imposes significant societal and economic burdens, including reduced workplace productivity, increased crime, and strained family dynamics.

One of the greatest barriers to addressing mental health issues is the persistence of cultural myths and superstitions. In many parts of South Asia, mental illnesses are still viewed as spiritual punishments or signs of moral failure. People often turn to

traditional healers instead of seeking professional care, resulting in harmful practices that delay recovery or worsen the condition. Education and awareness campaigns are essential to dismantle these harmful beliefs and encourage communities to embrace evidence-based solutions.

Research and policy advancements provide a glimmer of hope. Globally, initiatives like the Lancet Commission on Mental Health in 2023 have called for increased

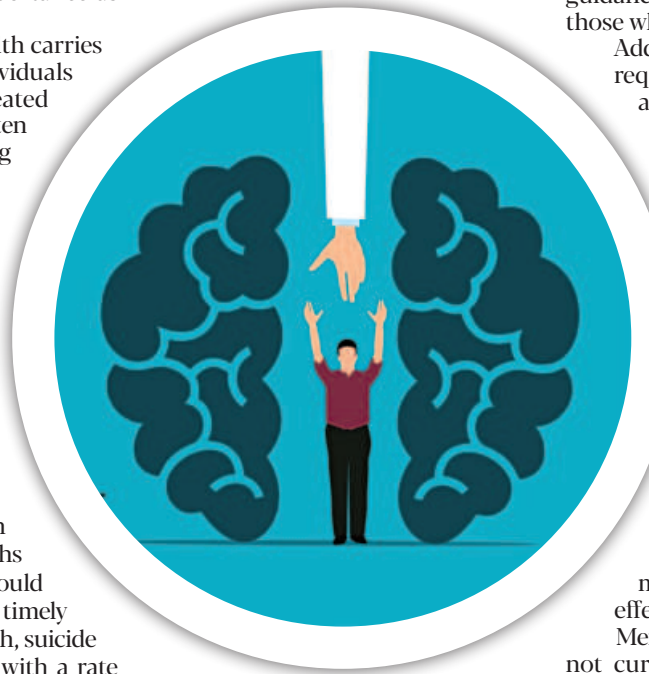
inhumane treatment and promote the dignity of those affected. However, gaps in implementation, resource allocation, and workforce availability continue to pose challenges.

Technology offers new opportunities to bridge these gaps. Digital platforms like Moner Bondhu are expanding access to counselling services, particularly for rural and underserved populations. Telemedicine and artificial intelligence-powered tools can also provide preliminary assessments and guidance, ensuring that help reaches those who need it most.

Addressing mental health requires a multifaceted approach. Family and community support are crucial in breaking the silence and encouraging affected individuals to seek help. Schools and workplaces must also play their part by promoting mental health awareness and creating inclusive environments. Governments must prioritise mental health in national budgets, increase the number of trained professionals, and ensure that laws protecting mental health rights are effectively enforced.

Mental health disorders are not curses or weaknesses; they are health conditions that demand understanding, compassion, and action. By normalising conversations around mental health and dismantling the stigma, we can create a world where seeking help is seen as a sign of strength rather than shame. Mental health is a shared responsibility, and addressing it is essential for building a healthier, more inclusive society.

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funding, integration of mental health into primary healthcare, and the use of community-based care models.

In Bangladesh, the enactment of the Mental Health Act, 2018, marked a significant step forward. This legislation guarantees the rights of individuals with mental disorders, prohibits discrimination, and mandates the establishment of mental health facilities. Sections of the act specifically criminalise

## Alternative treatments for anxiety



Anxiety disorders are common worldwide. While therapy and medication are traditional treatments, alternative therapies can be a valuable addition for managing mild anxiety. These methods aim to reduce anxiety symptoms with fewer side effects and can complement standard treatments when approved by a healthcare professional.

**1. Reduce caffeine and avoid alcohol and nicotine:** Excessive caffeine intake can worsen anxiety, even in amounts as low as 200 mg per day. Reducing caffeine consumption may help minimise anxiety. Similarly, while alcohol and nicotine might temporarily ease symptoms, they often make anxiety worse in the long run.

**2. Eat a nutritious diet:** A healthy, well-balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats supports mental health. It is also important to avoid processed foods and high sugar intake, which can trigger anxiety symptoms. Staying hydrated by drinking enough water is equally important for managing stress levels.

**3. Engage in regular physical activity:** Exercise, particularly cardiovascular activities, is proven to reduce stress and anxiety. Even a short burst of activity, like a brisk 10 minute walk, can provide hours of relief. Regular physical activity not only alleviates anxiety but also promotes overall well-being.

**4. Prioritise sleep:** Quality sleep plays a crucial role in reducing anxiety. Aim for 6-8 hours of sleep each night, and establish a consistent sleep schedule.

**5. Practice relaxation techniques:** Techniques such as meditation, yoga, and deep breathing exercises are effective in managing anxiety.

**6. Consider supplements and essential oils:** Herbal supplements like chamomile, passionflower, and L-theanine may help alleviate mild anxiety.

## Understanding high arches: causes, symptoms, and treatment options

High arches, or cavus foot, occur when the arch of your foot is raised more than normal, creating a structural issue that can lead to foot pain and discomfort. Unlike flat feet, where the arch is low, high arches cause the middle part of the foot to be excessively elevated. This condition can affect your posture, skeletal structure, and overall comfort while walking or standing.



**What causes high arches?** High arches can be caused by genetics or neurological disorders. Conditions such as spina bifida, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and stroke can lead to cavus foot. Inherited high arches typically remain stable over time, whereas those caused by neurological issues tend to worsen as the individual ages.

**Common symptoms of high arches:** Individuals with high arches often experience symptoms like: foot pain during walking, standing, or physical activities; difficulty finding properly fitting shoes; claw-like, bent toes when standing; heel tilting inward, causing instability; calluses on the foot's ball, side, or heel.

If you suspect you have high arches, you can perform a simple test at home by stepping on a piece of paper with wet feet. If you see little or no imprint of your foot's arch, it may indicate high arches.

**Treatment and management:** Treatment for high arches depends on the underlying cause and the severity of the condition. Non-surgical options include: Orthotic devices for added foot support; Corrective shoes that provide stability and reduce pain; Braces for additional ankle support.

In severe cases, surgery may be needed to improve foot stability, reduce pain, and prevent muscle imbalances. If the condition is genetic, one surgery is typically enough, but for neurological causes, multiple surgeries might be required.

Consult with a healthcare provider to determine the best treatment plan based on your individual case.

## T-BOOSTER: A revolutionary step in immunity enhancement

DR MD ARIF SHEIKH

The journey to restore immunity and reverse age-related decline has taken an exciting leap with the development of T-BOOSTER. This groundbreaking natural food supplement is poised to address a critical issue: thymic involution, a process where the thymus gland shrinks with age, leading to a decline in T-cell production and a weakened immune system.

**The role of the thymus in immunity:** The thymus gland plays a pivotal role in the body's immune defence, producing T cells that combat infections, cancer, and autoimmune diseases. However, thymic involution significantly reduces its effectiveness over time. Factors such as stress, infections, and cancer treatments can temporarily shrink the thymus, but research has shown that it has the potential to regenerate. Leveraging this capability, the creators of T-BOOSTER have formulated a supplement that aids thymus regeneration, enhancing immunity and unlocking youthful vitality.

**The science behind T-BOOSTER:** T-BOOSTER is a blend of 18 clinically proven compounds, including vitamins, minerals, and natural food extracts. Using artificial intelligence and advanced computational tools, the team has ensured that each ingredient interacts optimally with the thymus. The supplement targets multiple mechanisms to support thymus health, such as:

- Protecting the gland from oxidative damage using antioxidants.
- Balancing gut flora to reduce inflammatory signals.
- Preserving vital thymic cells and boosting T-cell functionality.
- Mitigating age-related inflammation, restoring a youthful immune response.

Manufactured in the UK by G&G Vitamins, T-BOOSTER adheres to the highest safety and quality standards. It is free from artificial additives, GMOs, and allergens, making it suitable for vegetarians, vegans, and halal consumers.

**Clinical trials: a commitment to validation:** To back its claims, T-BOOSTER has undergone rigorous scientific evaluation. A double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial involving 240 participants is currently underway. This study aims to evaluate its efficacy in enhancing immune function over four months, using advanced DNA-based analysis to assess thymus health.

**A vision for the future:** T-BOOSTER's developers, led by Dr Md Arif Sheikh, a molecular and structural biology expert, have an ambitious roadmap. The supplement is set for a global launch in 2025, targeting markets in the UK, Europe, Bangladesh, and the USA. With a focus on direct-to-consumer and retail channels, including e-commerce platforms like Amazon, T-BOOSTER aims to make its mark on the burgeoning health and wellness industry.

The project is supported by a distinguished team, including advisors and co-investigators with expertise in clinical trials, drug discovery, and business strategy. Together, they are working to ensure the product not only delivers health benefits but also meets the regulatory standards required for its international rollout.

**Empowering consumers for a healthier tomorrow:** T-BOOSTER is designed for individuals seeking to enhance their immunity and overall health, from seniors aiming for rejuvenated immune function to wellness enthusiasts and biohackers. Through a combination of robust research, innovative marketing strategies, and a consumer-centric approach, T-BOOSTER aspires to become a trusted name in immunity enhancement.

This innovative supplement underscores the potential of science and natural compounds to address pressing health challenges. With T-BOOSTER, the promise of longevity, vitality, and robust immunity is closer than ever.

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DR MOHAMMAD ALI

Over 80% of people worldwide experience low back pain (LBP) at some point in their lives. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), LBP is the leading cause of disability globally. LBP is typically classified into three categories: acute, subacute, and chronic. Pain lasting three months or longer is termed chronic low back pain (CLBP). Identifying the exact cause of CLBP is challenging, with WHO data suggesting that 90% of CLBP cases lack a specific cause and are referred to as nonspecific low back pain (NSCLBP).

Traditionally, treatments for LBP have included pain medications, electrotherapy, and steroid injections. However, extensive research published in The Lancet in 2018 declared these conventional treatments ineffective for long-term management. Instead, the study emphasised the importance of a biopsychosocial approach to treatment.

**What is STOPS?**

STOPS, or Specific Treatment of the Problems of the Spine, is an innovative treatment method developed by Australian researchers. Its core principle is precise diagnosis. Since chronic LBP often lacks a single identifiable cause, STOPS focuses on identifying multiple contributing factors. These factors may include:

**Physical:** Conditions like PLID (prolapsed lumbar intervertebral disc).

**Psychological:** Issues such as depression.

**Socioeconomic:** Stressors like family discord.

The treatment process begins with a detailed assessment of these factors. A personalised plan is then created to address the obstacles the patient faces in recovering from pain. Additionally, the patient's profession and daily activities are analysed to devise a fitness program tailored to their post-recovery lifestyle. As a result, the treatment approach varies for each patient,

based on their unique contributing factors.

**Effectiveness of STOPS**

Extensive clinical trials have demonstrated that STOPS is significantly more effective and cost-efficient than conventional treatments. In Bangladesh, LBP treatment is often prohibitively expensive, with hospitalisation costs frequently escalating to many times the initial expense. In contrast, STOPS emphasises reducing treatment costs, even for spinal pain conditions like neck pain.

Patients typically undergo therapy once or twice a week, minimising hospital visits. Consequently, STOPS is recognised globally as an affordable and highly effective treatment option.

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## Early surgery vs. endoscopy for painful chronic pancreatitis

Chronic pancreatitis, marked by persistent abdominal pain and compromised quality of life, is commonly treated with surgery or endoscopy. A randomised trial, initially conducted in the Netherlands, compared these two approaches in 88 patients (mean age 54) with chronic pancreatitis, dilated ducts, and chronic pain. The trial found that after 18 months, surgery provided slightly better pain relief than endoscopy, though the difference was not significant.

In the latest follow-up, with a median of 98 months, surgery continued to show greater pain relief and higher patient satisfaction compared to endoscopic treatment. However,



overall quality of life and disease progression markers were similar between the two groups. Notably, about half of the endoscopy-first patients eventually crossed over to surgery due to inadequate pain relief, and these patients had worse outcomes than

those who initially underwent surgery. Conversely, about one-third of surgery-first patients required endoscopic interventions during follow-up.

These findings suggest that surgery may offer more durable pain relief, but the decision should be individualized. While surgery appears more effective in the long term, endoscopy can still be a viable first option for some patients, especially those seeking less invasive treatment. A stepwise, flexible approach that adapts to patient response may provide the best outcomes. Further research is needed to refine treatment strategies and better understand the long-term impact of both methods.

Source: JAMA Surgery