

Effect of present conflicted situation in Pakistan on Mental Health of Pakistani population: Time for immediate actions

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Abstract

Pakistan is in state of war since many years. This conflict situation has greatly affected mental health of Pakistani people. One percent of the Pakistani population is suffering from severe mental disorders. Depression rate is between 30 to 50% in Pakistani population². As we discuss the effect of present conflicted situation in Pakistan on mental health of Pakistani population, we assume that the following factors are strongly associated with marked increase in mental illnesses in Pakistan:

Shortage of Psychiatric and Psychologist professionals:

Unfortunately, Pakistan is one of the countries which have limited numbers of professionals in psychiatry and psychology fields. In 2001, according to WHO, there were only 320 psychiatrists based in major urban centers of Pakistan¹. General health care professionals and social workers are not properly trained in dealing with psychiatric and psychology problems.

Lack of psychiatric support in primary care level:

There is lack of psychiatric support in primary care level which can provide good psychiatric support at early stages of disorders. The health system of Pakistan is not well established with significant resources.³

Poor economical situation:

Due to political unrest Pakistan's economy is nearly collapsed. Poverty is one of the biggest factors associated with psychiatric disorders in the Pakistani population.

Lack of support from international NGOs:

There is lack of private sector support for improvement of mental health care. Only few local and international NGOs are active in creating awareness about mental health.

Lack of education and false beliefs:

As considerable portion of the Pakistani population is illiterate, they are more prone to mental disorders. A someof people having mental problems do not prefer to seek psychiatric help because of the stigma associated with mental disorders.

Recommendations & Suggestions:

There is great need for specific mental health care policy at government level. Also, a movement of awareness about psychiatric and behavioral disturbance should be started at national level. There should be proper psychiatric support facilities available in primary care level which will help to treat mental health problems at early stage. International NGOs and donor agencies should come forward in order to help the Pakistani government to improve mental health care conditions. Foreign investors should be encouraged to invest in Pakistan which will support the weak economy of the country and will create new employment opportunities. New training institutes for psychiatry and psychology fields should be opened to meet the high demand of professional staff in psychiatry and psychology field. Psychiatric training should be given at both undergraduate and postgraduate level in medical education curriculum. Electronic media in Pakistan can play a very active role for creating awareness about mental health care in the Pakistani population. People should be educated about prejudices issues and can be encouraged to solve these prejudices which are major contributors for conflicted situation in some areas of Pakistan. We recommend taking immediate actions for this alarming situation of mental health care problems in Pakistan.

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