
Mental Health and Neurological Disorders



UN, 2008 World Mental Health Day

Language English

Mental and neurological disorders include diseases such as depression & dementia.

Dementia, particularly Alzheimer's Disease, and depression are among the conditions affecting the brain which afflict millions of people worldwide, increasingly in developing countries. They are often co-morbid with other non communicable diseases. Some mental illness can be prevented by reducing common NCD risk factors, but generally can be difficult to cure, requiring therapy and medication to reduce symptoms.

Mental and neurological disorders, diverse in problems and symptoms, affect thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationships. Neurological and mental disorders, for example depression, dementia, autism, epilepsy and schizophrenia, can be experienced in isolation, or as co-morbidities with other NCDs. There is overlap with risk factors with the other non-communicable diseases, and neurological and mental diseases are also often chronic in nature.

The Disorders

Mental Disorders

Mental disorders represent a wide spectrum of afflictions, with one of the most common being depression. Mental diseases often are considered to be comorbid with other common NCDs due to potential bidirectional causality.

Depression

- It is estimated that around 350 million people are affected by depression.
- Worldwide about 10% of pregnant women and 13% of women who have just given birth experience a mental

disorder, primarily depression.

- In developing countries this is even higher, i.e. 15.6% during pregnancy and 19.8% after child birth.
- Worldwide 10-20% of children and adolescents experience mental disorders.
- Half of all mental illnesses begin by the age of 14 and three-quarters by mid-20s.

Depression can impede future personal development, health, education, employment. Severe cases of depression can lead to suicide. 75% of suicides occur in LMICs, but effective strategies such as early detection, treatment and ongoing support mean suicide can be prevented. Learn more at the WHO website linked below.

Dementia

As of 2015, there were an estimated 47.5 million people with dementia worldwide. This number will increase to an estimated 75 million in 2030, and 131 million in 2050. Much of the increase will be in developing countries.

Dementia is a class of degenerative brain syndromes that negatively affect multiple cognitive processes, including memory, behaviour, emotional processing and control, and cognition. There are multiple forms of dementia, with Alzheimer's disease being the most common type.

Alzheimer's Disease

It is estimated that 50-75% of dementia cases can be classified as Alzheimer's Disease (AD). AD causes the destruction of brain cells and associated nerves and interferes with neurotransmitter functions. Particularly, the memory system of the brain is compromised. As the disease progresses, an individual's capacity to communicate, think, and remember deteriorates.

In 2015, the estimated global cost of dementia was 818 billion USD, or about 1.09% of the world's GDP. At the national level, country GDP percentages dedicated to dementia ranged from 0.24% in low-income countries to 1.24% in high-income countries.

The Response

Prevention and risk factors

Risk factors for mental and neurological diseases include genetics, older age, tobacco use, drug and alcohol use, unhealthy diet, and physical inactivity. Environmental exposures, such as pollution, and cranial injuries also place individuals at risk.

Research on prevention is still being developed, but health-promoting lifestyle choices can decrease one's risk of these diseases. A nutritious diet, avoidance of tobacco, and increased physical activity all can qualify as preventative measures.

Treatment

Though there currently is no cure for this class of NCDs, some specific diseases have treatments available. For Alzheimer's Disease, there is a class of drug treatments known as cholinesterase inhibitors that can slow the progression of the disease. Other drugs are available to dampen some specific symptoms of these diseases, such as mood swings and sleeplessness. Beyond drugs, emotional support and therapy is often employed to help those affected by these diseases.

In 2013, the WHO World Health Assembly endorsed *WHO's Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020*, which *"recognises the essential role of mental health in achieving health for all people"*.

[World Mental Health Day](#) [1] is held annually on the October 10th.

Source: [Alzheimer's Disease International](#) [2]

Related Resource: [World Alzheimer Report 2016 - Improving healthcare for people living with dementia.](#) [3]
[Mental Health Atlas 2017](#) [4]
[WHO - Mental Disorders](#) [5]

[WHO - Mental Health Gap Action Programme \(mhGAP\) Intervention Guide](#) [6]

[WHO Mental Health Action Plan 2013 - 2020](#) [7]

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Links

[1] <http://wfmh.com/#>

[2] <http://www.alz.co.uk/>

[3] <http://staging.ncdalliance.org/resources/world-alzheimer-report-2016-improving-healthcare-for-people-living-with-dementia>

[4] <http://staging.ncdalliance.org/resources/mental-health-atlas-2017>

[5] <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs396/en/>

[6] http://www.who.int/mental_health/publications/mhGAP_intervention_guide/en/

[7] https://www.who.int/mental_health/publications/action_plan/en/

[8] <http://staging.ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/mentally-healthy-at-work>

[9] <http://staging.ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/380>

[10] <http://staging.ncdalliance.org/category/tags/mental-health>

[11] <http://staging.ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/68>

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