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Impact of COVID-19 on mental health and homoeopathy

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Abstract

Repeatedly history has been a proof that each time human have tried to manipulate nature, it has made humankind repent for each deed. The nature of epidemic and pandemic from the plague of Athens to the outbreak of COVID-19, all are the rewards of the greed, manipulation and hyper-individualistic mentality of the humans^[9]. In March 2020, the outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) reached all countries of the Western world. To reduce the speed of its spread, many countries slowed down their economies and enforced pronounced restrictions on public life. It is claimed that the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has had a negative impact on mental health. The whole medical fraternity is going through a very challenging times in controlling the Covid-19 pandemic because of non-availability of specific medicine for treating corona virus infection. Homoeopathic fraternity knows that there is a wide scope to offer treatment for corona virus. Subsyndromal mental health problems are a common response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) have suggested the use of Arsenicum album-30 for its possible role in preventing COVID19 infection.

Keywords: COVID-19, anxiety, depression, stress, public health

Introduction

Four year before a new disease of unknown etiology appeared in Wuhan in China, which was later rapidly identified as severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus, causing severe respiratory illness and declared as pandemic on 30th Jan 2020. Covid 19^[1]. a pandemic is just not a medical phenomenon, but it is severely affecting the mental health of a person. Human being is said to be a social personality and is always in contact with the society in all social aspects. The corona virus disease 2019 pandemic has caused high morbidity and mortality in older adults over the world. Because the corona virus disease 2019 pandemic greatly affects older adults who have a pre-existing health condition, they are generally susceptible to a high incidence of severe symptoms of anxiety and depression. Therefore, we aimed to assess the prevalence of anxiety and depression symptoms in older adults during the corona virus disease 2019 pandemic^[6].

Modes of Transmission

Person gets infected through respiratory droplets of other infected person, droplets generated from infected person like coughing, sneezing, or talks. Touching the face with contaminated hands are high risks for transmission of infection.⁽²¹⁾Respiratory droplets don't remain within the air for long. It are often found within the metals, glass, plastic surfaces, now recent research found that it can board shoes. Complicating factor is about 25% of individuals are asymptomatic during transmission of disease. So, CDC (Centre for Disease Control) reported that 3-6 feet distance to be maintained while visiting others or in other places. It is still unclear that the disease transmits through Air^[22].

Symptoms of COVID-19

The main symptoms include:

- Fever
- Coughing
- Shortness of breath
- Trouble breathing
- Fatigue
- Chills, sometimes with shaking
- Body aches
- Headache

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- Sore throat
- Congestion/runny nose
- Loss of smell or taste
- Nausea
- Diarrhea ^[26].

Some psychologists have investigated how COVID-19 has affected people's behaviour in terms of threat perception, social backgrounds, and the adjustment of personal and collective interests, stress and coping. These psychologists have concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected people psychologically. The coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic brought several worldwide health, social and economic disturbances particularly associated with the imposed confinement measures that raised concerns about an emerging public mental health crisis. Studies investigating the early mental health impact of the pandemic on general population and vulnerable groups, such as healthcare workers, revealed a high prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms, among others, and found several risk and protective factors. Along with these findings, the risk of substance use, suicide, domestic violence, and complicated grief may increase. We further discuss interventions that can be applied at a governmental, institutional, and individual level to minimize the mental health consequences of the pandemic, such as using tele health to provide remote support or practicing self-care. These interventions should be maintained after the initial outbreak, as current disturbances may impact long-term well-being. We encourage the development of longitudinal studies to assess long-term adaptive response.

Quarantine and self-isolation can most likely cause a negative impact on one's mental health. A review published in *The Lancet* said that the separation from loved ones, loss of freedom, boredom, and uncertainty can cause a deterioration in an individual's mental health status. To overcome this, measures at the individual and societal levels are required. Under the current global situation, both children and adults are experiencing a mix of emotions. They can be placed in a situation or an environment that may be new and can be potentially damaging to their health ^[24].

Parents can also develop a home schedule that can help their children to keep up with their studies. Parents should show less stress or anxiety at their home as children perceive and feel negative energy from their parents. The involvement of parents in healthy activities with their children can help to reduce stress and anxiety and bring relief to the overall situation.

However, something as simple as a phone call during the pandemic outbreak can help to console elderly people. COVID-19 can also result in increased stress, anxiety and depression among elderly people already dealing with mental health issues.

Health workers should take short breaks between their working hours and deal with the situation calmly and in a relaxed manner.

However, the current situation requires a clear understanding of the effects of the recent outbreak on the mental health of people of different age groups to prevent and avoid the COVID-19 pandemic ^[24].

Depression Following the Lockdown

COVID-19 led to policies of quarantine in an attempt to

contain the pandemic, Enforced by government and community officials, strict lockdown measures prohibited residents from leaving the city, restricted each household to send one person to purchase groceries. To further limit group activities, the local government also took steps to reward individuals who reported neighbours breaking social distancing rules. Inevitably, mandatory quarantine generated common challenges such as working from home while balancing childcare, experiencing wage loss, and lacking food supplies and clashed with the fundamental human need for connection and belonging. Forced social isolation reduced social and physical contacts with others, thereby generating elevated depressed mood, emotional disturbance, boredom, frustration, and blocking access to effective coping strategies such as seeking social support.

Specifically, health care workers or employees in high-exposure-risk locations were significantly more likely to exhibit symptoms of depression, anxiety, distress, insomnia, and PTSD symptoms. Therefore, it is reasonable to suspect that different patterns of mental health issues existed across provinces that were exposed to COVID-19 to different degrees.

Some effects of COVID-19 that impact on mental health

^[4]: Fear of being contaminated and contaminating others, triggering acute stress reactions; need for quarantine, change of routine and confinement culminate in feelings of helplessness, boredom, anxiety, anguish, irritability and anger at the loss of freedom; mourning, depression in the face of deaths without farewell rituals can increase suicide risk; those admitted in ICUs can develop severe depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychiatric conditions in the future; and economic and job losses can turn acute stress into chronic, increasing the risk for mental disorders. When anguish or depression are uncontrollable, or impact on other aspects of life, such as family or professional function, it is necessary to seek professional help.

Physical impacts range from Eyestrain, eyestrain, blurring of vision sleeplessness, tiredness, body ache, neck and wrist pain to obesity, male infertility due to radiation, seizures, brain tumours etc. Psychological impacts are anxiety, negative emotions, depression, lack of concentration, restlessness ^[15, 19]. Problematic use can be assessed by the urge to check messages, activeness on social platforms, sleeping with smart phone under pillow and watching smart phone while eating ^[17, 20]. It has also led to the interference with the daily activities and decreased productivity ^[16]. Furthermore, it was found that limited participation in social interaction can be conducive to better quality sleep. Researchers also compared psychological trauma rates among general public, non- front-line nurses, and front-line nurses who were engaged in the process of treating COVID-19 patients. It turned out that the first two groups had the highest traumatization scores was presented among the first two groups, whereas traumatization scores for front-line nurses were somewhat lower. Due to sensory limitations, deaf individuals may have a range of psychological traits that make them more vulnerable when compared to hearing and speaking individuals. People with hearing impairments make up a rather significant portion of the population. The coronavirus pandemic has had a negative impact on the mental health of the population, increasing the risk of collapsing mental health system.

Homoeopathic management

Hahnemannian concept of collective Disease First case of epidemic may not give the complete picture ^[12] Close observation of several cases the physician obtains the totality of symptoms of the epidemic ^[13] 'several cases of every such collective disease that he can become conversant with the totality of its signs & symptoms' ^[12]. Homoeopathy for managing mental stress during COVID-19 is that, in homeopathy, a lot of importance is given to the mental symptoms during case taking. Infact mentals are given top ranking in homeopathy because we believe the symptoms go from mental plane to physical plane. The diseases are caused due to continuous mental stress and strain, which shows in the form of physical symptoms. In homeopathy the root cause is to be treated. Any change from the normal mental state in an individual is given prime importance and this forms an important part of the totality of symptoms in homeopathy. As in aphorism 230 explained about homoeopathic remedy fares in the treatment of mental and emotional disease⁽⁷⁾The vast superiority of the homoeopathic system over all other conceivable method is best displayed in the treatment of mental and emotional disease of long standing caused by physical maladies if the antipsoric remedy is appropriately chosen (Ganguly, 2004) ^[8]. A lot of homoeopathic medicines are known to act wonderfully and tackle the symptoms of anxiety, depression, feeling of loneliness, irritability, temper-tantrums, bore-dome which are now days common taking in view the current lockdown period. Also they are easy to take without any side effects.

Homoeopathic Medicines ^[30]

Some important homeopathic medicines that showed great role in management of post COVID-19 symptoms are:

Arsenic Album-for Fatigue, Anxiety Issues

It is indicated in cases where an individual feels weak or fatigued after any slight physical exertion. This also plays an important role in management of anxiety and restlessness due to anxiety. It also has been successful in individuals suffering from gastrointestinal troubles after COVID and manages symptoms like diarrhea and nausea.

Ignatia-for depression

It is a top-ranking medicine in homeopathy when it comes to depression like symptoms. It is indicated in people who are experiencing symptoms like sadness, melancholy along with irritability and loneliness post infection. Great improvement is seen in individuals suffering from mental dullness and mood swings due to depressive episodes.

Ipecac-For Nausea and abdominal distension

It is indicated in cases of upsetting nausea. Nausea is constant with excessive salivation, Weakness. Distension of Abdominal with vomiting of white mucus that causes extreme discomfort.

Rhus Tox-For Muscle Pain, Joint Pain

Rhus Tox is a leading medicine for managing muscle pain and joint pains in homeopathy. This medicine helps to relieve the pain & stiffness in the muscles and joints. Individuals suffering from joint or muscle pain of unknown origin post COVID are highly indicative for this particular medicine especially if you also have redness and swelling in the joints.

Phosphoric acid-for fatigue and brain stupor

It is also a very important medicine that can be used to deal with post covid symptoms. It helps to manage fatigue felt after an unbearable acute illness like COVID-19. This medicine also helps manage the symptoms like brain stupor, Memory weakness, and dullness of the mind.

China-for loose stool, weakness

In homeopathy, it is used to control the symptoms of diarrhea and weakness. Gastrointestinal symptoms are very common after COVID-19 infection and hence this medicine can be used in combination with other traditional medicine to manage the symptoms and restore health.

Steps to be followed by healthy patients

It's important to ensure that the infected person follows all the precautions laid down by the healthcare providers. You should also stay in a separate room and use a separate bathroom away from the infected person. It's important to ensure that any pets should stay away as well It's best to avoid any visitors at this point Preferably avoid air conditioners if you COVID positive case at home. It's important to maintain proper hygiene to avoid transmission of the virus ^[27]. Make sure you wash your hands for about 20 seconds with soap and water. In the absence of soap and water, you can use an alcohol based sanitizer, where the alcohol content is at least 60-95%. Avoid touching your nose, mouth, or eyes too much unless your hands are washed with soap water. You shouldn't reuse facemasks or gloves and dispose of them right away. When you're removing the protective covers, start with the glove first and immediately wash your hands. Wash all the laundry thoroughly. Discard all the clothes that are contaminated with blood, stool, or body fluids. You should always wear gloves while you're dealing with the soiled items. Clean your hands immediately after handling the soiled items. Do contact the health care providers or toll free numbers given by government in any further clarification regarding COVID-19 ^[28].

Conclusion

Research evaluating the direct neuropsychiatric consequences and the indirect effects on mental health is highly needed to improve treatment, mental health care planning and for preventive measures during potential subsequent pandemics ^[25]. Homoeopathy can be utilized effectively in outbreak of any infectious disease. The effectiveness of homoeopathic preventive medicines needs further clinical, molecular studies as well. In any kind of epidemic disease like influenza, any kind of exhausting fever homoeopathic medicine works miraculously ^[11]. Though from Hahnemann time during pandemics homeopathy have given the best results, while the mortality was very less when compared to modern medicine. This pandemic now, in 2021 and about to enter into 2022, we are fighting for our rights and we will get best results, and homeopathy medicine should reach each and every person in this world as the second largest practised medicine in whole world ^[23]. The role of homeopathy in treating COVID-19, adding a potentially quick and effective treatment modality which is both safe and inexpensive ^[29].

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