

Media Impact in Seeking Care for Mental Health: A Case Report and Literature Review

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Abstract

Among various strategies, media plays a vital role in promoting mental health awareness and encouraging people to seek professional care.

Our aim is to report a case of a 63-year-old male who presented with persistent depressive symptoms for 27 years which interfered significantly with his daily life activities. He sought help from different traditional healers and religious leaders with no significant improvement. He decided to seek professional help after learning about depression symptoms through the Media on Mental Health program. Before that, he struggled to understand the complexity of his emotions. He was diagnosed with persistent depressive disorder, was placed under treatment, and progressed well after 3 months.

Keywords: Mental Health; Media; Depression

Introduction

Despite several strategies developed for the promotion of mental health awareness such as the use of media, mental disorders are still one of the greatest contributors to the global burden of diseases [1,2].

Media are predominant means of interaction where people share information which helps in spreading awareness of numerous social issues [3]. On average nearly 2.1 billion people use social media every day, the platform connects people where it can be used to promote mental health services [2-4].

Studies have shown that the use of media is a cost-effective method compared to other means such as mass gatherings to deliver mental health awareness and people living with mental illnesses use media platforms at comparable rates as the general population [5,6]. People with mental illness use media for several reasons. It serves as a means of expression and a coping mechanism [5]. Additionally, online communities offer emotional support and allow individuals to seek information about their mental health concerns, such as symptoms and treatment options [3,6]. Media also provides the opportunity to share experiences with others facing similar challenges [7,8].

Positively utilizing media can effectively promote mental health awareness, reduce stigma especially cultural beliefs attributing to mental illnesses, and decrease negative outcomes such as delays in seeking care [2,6,8].

Case Report

We are reporting a case of a 63-year-old male who presented to us with excessive sadness most days for 27 years which is associated with him blaming himself that he has not accomplished his goals. He identifies himself as a failure and reports it as a feeling of emptiness. Three months later, these symptoms were accompanied by a loss of interest in doing his usual pleasurable activities, not being able to maintain sleep, decreased appetite, being easily fatigued, and having phases of social isolation. He reports having stressors such as work-related issues i.e. increments, low salary and not being appreciated. He sought care from religious leaders and traditional healers because he thought he was bewitched but reports that the symptoms did not subside. Seven years ago, the symptoms were so severe that made him retire early. He reported that he felt hopeless and lacked the motivation to do his work. He reports seeking professional help after hearing through the Media on Mental Health program (facilitated by a psychiatrist) and gaining an understanding of mental health specifically depression symptoms. This was attained through insightful discussions, relatable narratives, and expert guidance that was provided by the mental health specialist. He reports that before that program, he was struggling to understand the complexity of his emotional states. Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and lethargy seemed to overwhelm him without any explanation. However, through that program, he began to understand the parallels between his experiences and the symptoms discussed. Furthermore, he explained that the program offered him strategies for coping with depression ranging from seeking professional help and engaging in open conversation with his loved ones. He was then convinced that what he was experiencing might be an issue in dealing with mental health and that's when he decided to take the dials and contact the mental health specialist for the appointment so that he may start treatment.

During the assessment, he was kempt, and calm with a low tone, volume, and rate of speech, sad mood, and depressed affect with partial insight. His thought content was coherent and logical with no perceptual disturbances. A provisional diagnosis of persistent depressive disorder was made. Biological investigations were done where renal function, liver function, and thyroid function tests (T4, T3, TSH) were normal. He was initiated on anti-depressants tab fluoxetine 20 mg po am, placed on cognitive behavioral therapy for depression, and attended occupational therapy. Currently, the patient is progressing well and symptoms have subsided after three months.

Discussion

Our case of persistent depressive disorder is one of the psychiatric disorders that contribute to the global disease burden [9]. It is characterized by a chronic long-term form of depression that can severely impact the daily functioning and quality of life [9]. It is of concern because it has increased in disability-adjusted for years. This may be due to a delay in seeking professional treatment [1].

Several studies have highlighted that delays in seeking professional treatment may be lack of awareness [5]. Many individuals may not recognize the chronic nature of symptoms, or they may attribute them to cultural stigmas hence leading to delays in care [10]. Our patient lacked awareness in recognizing his symptoms and misconceptions of attributing his symptoms to spiritual and witchcraft beliefs which led to a delay in seeking care. This caused him to have worsening symptoms, prolonged suffering, and a decrease in productivity.

Several ways have been reported to be used to promote awareness of mental illness such as the use of media, mass campaigns, and educational workshops [3,6,7]. However, using media has been demonstrated to be particularly cost-effective compared to other modes such as mass campaigns or workshops [6,7]. This is because they require fewer human resources, financial and logistical investments than organizing a mass campaign or gathering people for workshops. This makes the dissemination of information to the majority of people relatively low-cost [6,7].

Effective utilization of media through mental health campaigns can be used as the platform for reducing stigma especially cultural beliefs attributing mental illness to spiritual or witchcraft causes as seen in our case.

Conclusion

Media has emerged as a powerful tool for mental health awareness promotion. It has shown an impact in alleviating cultural stigmas and barriers to care hence continuing the use of media can enhance effectiveness in improving access to mental health services and ultimately contribute to a reduction in the global burden of mental disorders.

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Declarations of Conflict of Interest

All authors declare there are no competing interests.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was not required.

Consent to Participate

Written informed consent was obtained for participation.

Consent for Publication

Written informed consent was obtained for publication.

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Data Availability

All data are available in Word format

Guarantor

All authors are guarantors of this paper as FK, NK, and ES managed the patient and collected all clinical information. FK wrote the first draft. NK and ES reviewed the draft. All authors read, edited, and approved the final manuscript.

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