

Mental Health & the South Asian Community

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Mental Illness

- **Complex interplay of genetic, biological, personality and environmental factors**
- **≈ half with depression or anxiety not seen doctor**
- **Stigma or discrimination a major barrier for diagnosis, treatment & acceptance**
- **Can be treated effectively**

Common Psychiatric Issues

- Depression
- **Dementia**
- **Mood disorders**
- **Anxiety disorders**
- **Addiction disorders**
- **Psychotic disorders**
- **Personality disorders**
- **Adjustment disorder**

Epidemiology & Chronicity

≈ 20% overall

- 8% major depression
- 1% bipolar disorder
- 1% schizophrenia
- 5% anxiety disorders, women > men
- **Suicide - leading cause of death in young**
 - mortality 4x greater in men

Epidemiology & Chronicity

- **63% follow-up rate within 30 days (99% - heart failure)**
- **Peer support, with MI: reduce hospitalization, increase QOL**
- **70% of MI onset during adolescence**
- **Increasing prevalence of substance use disorders**
 - **Men > women**
- **Aging population: tsunami of dementia cases**
- **Mental illnesses: >15% of burden of disease in Canada**
 - **< 6% of health care dollars**

Depression in Punjabis

- **Very few Canadian prevalence studies**
- **Generally similar prevalence**
- **Present as emotional distress and physical symptom**
- **In a UK study: Punjabis & English prevalence**
 - **Depression more common in Punjabis (28.8% vs. 18%)**
 - **Anxiety disorders less common in Punjabis (2.5% vs. 8.3%)**
 - **Punjabi women vs. English women (39.1% vs. 19.5%)**
 - **Depression was more common in Punjabi women than Punjabi men**
 - **More common with significant somatic symptoms**
 - **Punjabis at higher risk of depression for all levels of somatic symptoms**
 - **Suicide rate remains high across Punjabi Diaspora**

6-Month Prevalence of Mental Disorders in South Asians

	South Asian (33)		White (44)		
	N	%	N	%	
DSM-III-R diagnosis					
Panic	4	12	8	18	NS
Agoraphobia	3	9	11	25	NS
Generalised anxiety disorder	7	21	8	18	NS
Any anxiety disorder	10	30	21	48	NS
Major depressive disorder	23	70	26	59	NS
Dysthymia	8	24	9	21	NS
Any depressive disorder	31	94	33	75	$\chi^2 = 4.8, P = 0.03$
Drug abuse/dependence	1	3	1	2	NS
Alcohol abuse/dependence	1	3	3	7	NS
Any substance use disorder	1	3	4	9	NS
Total co-morbidity	10	30	15	34	NS
Duration of at least 6 months	23	70	29	66	NS

Understanding of Mental Health Issues

	South Asian (33)		White (44)		
	N	%	N	%	
What if anything, did you think was the matter?					NS
Psychosocial problem	22	67	27	61	
Physical problem	8	24	5	11	
Other or no explanation	3	9	12	27	
What did you think was the likely cause?					NS
Psychosocial reason	14	42	22	50	
Physical illness	12	36	10	23	
Other or no explanation	7	21	12	27	
Discussed problem with a relative or friend	23	70	39	89	$\chi^2 = 4.3, P = 0.04$
Contact with general practitioner	31	94	31	71	$\chi^2 = 6.6, P = 0.01$
Discussed problem with general practitioner	18	55	16	36	NS
Psychiatric medication*	3	9	5	11	NS
Seen by mental health professional**	3	9	5	11	NS

Factors affecting Access to Psychological Services

- **Shame/Stigma/Superstitions**
- **Beliefs/Perceptions**
- **Acculturation/Trust**
- **Education**
- **Knowledge of Services**
- **Knowledge of Mental Illness**

Experience with Mental Health Services in UK

	South Asian
Talk Therapy	Lower participation than Caucasian community
Contact with MH professionals	Similar to Caucasian community
Follow-ups in 1 year	Lower than Caucasian community

Ethnic variations in the experiences of mental health service users in England: Results of a national patient survey programme. (Raleigh, Irons, Hawe, Scobie, Cook, Reeves, Petruckevitch, Harrison)

Effect of stigma on accessing services

- **Increased perception of personal stigma of suffering**
- **Negative attitude towards counseling services**
- **Most (55%) say they would be unlikely to enter a spousal relationship with someone who has a mental illness.**
- **46% of Canadians think people use the term mental illness as an excuse for bad behaviour**

Unique Issues...South Asian Seniors with Mental Illness

- **Profound identity loss**
- **Social displacement**
 - **Perceived loss of social status**
- **Isolation**
- **Loss of purpose**
- **Language & cultural barriers**
 - **Changing family structure**
 - **Role reversals**
- **Need for culturally sensitive residential alternatives**

Protective Factors in Ethnic Groups

- **Familial support**
- **Acceptance**
- **Role of spirituality**
- **Socio-economic support**
 - **Acceptance of services/psycho-education**

Management

- **Education and medicalization of illness**
- **Understanding**
 - **chronicity of mental illness**
 - **other co-occurring diseases**
- **Early relapse, prevention**
- **Compliance (patient and family)**
- **Make info available and accessible**
- **Undoing stigma**

Future efforts and opportunities

- **Outreach to population in need**
- **Studying efficacy of psychotherapy (talk therapy) models**
- **Teaching/awareness**
- **Psychopharmacology to emphasize chronicity**
- **Cultural/community effort to undo stigma**

thank you

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