PSYCHOTHERAPY AS A TECHNIQUE FOR TREATING MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Mental health refers to a person's cognitive, and/or emotional well being. It is all about how one thinks feels and behaves. Mental health can affect daily life, relationships and even physical health. According to Medlexicons Medical Dictionary (2010), "Mental health is emotional, behavioral and social maturity or normality; the absence of a mental or behavioral disorder; a state of psychological well-being in which one has achieved a satisfactory integration of one's instinctual drives acceptable to both oneself and one's social milieu; an appropriate balance of love, work, and leisure pursuits". Mental health refers to a person's cognitive, and /or emotional well being. It is all about how one thinks feels and behaves. Mental health can affect daily life relationships and even physical health. Psychological interventions to treat mental health issues have developed remarkably in the past few decades and techniques like psychotherapy are used to treat mental health problem. Despite advances, mental health professionals are likely to reduce the prevalence, incidence and burden of mental illness mainly due to stigma. Hence, the Government and voluntary organization should promote strategies to eliminate stigma towards Mental illness and visiting mental health professionals. When compared to mental health services in western countries very limited services are provided in Indian context. Policy makers should consider these aspects while allotting budget to these services.

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INTRODUCTION

Mental health refers to a person's cognitive, and/or emotional well being. It is all about how one thinks feels and behaves.

According to Medlexicons Medical Dictionary (2010), "Mental health is emotional, behavioral and social maturity or normality; the absence of a mental or behavioral disorder; a state of psychological well-being in which one has achieved a satisfactory integration of one's instinctual drives acceptable to both oneself and one's social milieu; an appropriate balance of love, work, and leisure pursuits".

According to World Health Organization (WHO) (2006)," Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". WHO stresses that mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder.

Mental health can affect daily life, relationships and even physical health. Mental health also includes a person's ability to enjoy life to attain a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience.

According to Medical News Today (2010) approximately 25 per cent of the people in the UK have a mental health problem during their lives. The USA is said to have the heighest incidence of people diagnosed with mental health problems in the developed world.

Mental Health Facilities and Services

When mental health status in Indian context is observed it has been reported that, mental health disorders affect 5 crore of Indian population (5%) and need special care. 80 per cent of districts in India do not have even one psychiatrist in public service (Medical News Today ,2006).

WHO (2001) estimates indicated that prevalence levels of about 22 per cent of individuals are developing one or more mental or behavioral disorders in their lifetime.

According to WHO, (2011) countries like India devote less than 1 per cent of their health budget to mental health compared to around 18 per cent in other countries. Fifteen per cent of all health related disabilities in the country can be attributed to mental illness.

Table-1 shows the statistics regarding mental health facilities as given by National Service Capacity Psychiatric Beds and Professionals, (2009).

Table-1: Statistics regarding Mental Health Facilities in India

(As given by National Service Capacity Psychiatric Beds and Professionals, 2009).

S.No.	Mental health facilities	Number available/ 10,000 population
1.	Total Psychiatric beds in mental hospitals	20
2.	Total Psychiatric beds in General hospitals	5
3.	Total Psychiatric beds in other settings	1

From the table-1 it is evident that per 10,000 population there are only 20 psychiatric beds in mental hospitals, 5 beds in general hospitals per and only one bed in other settings. Several mental health disorders that include schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, organic psychosis and major depression affect nearly 20 per 1000 population. When the available facilities are compared with this need there is dearth of facilities and there is dire need to improve mental health facilities in Indian context.

Table-2 reveals the statistics regarding mental health services in India.

Table-2. Statistics regarding Mental Health Services in India

(As given by National Service Capacity Psychiatric Beds and Professionals, 2009).

S.No.	Mental health services	Number available/ 1,00,000 population
1.	Total Psychiatrists	400
2.	Total Psychiatric nurses	40
3.	Total Social workers	20
4.	Mental hospitals	43

From Table-2 it is clear that for 1,00,000 populations there are 400 psychiatrists, 40 psychiatric nurses and 20 social welfare persons and there are 43 mental hospitals with a bed capacity of 20,000.

Mental Health and Psychotherapy

Psychological interventions to treat mental health issues have developed remarkably in the past few decades.

Psychotherapy is the treatment, by psychological means of problems of an emotional nature in which a trained person deliberately establishes a professional relationship with the patient with the object of (1) removing, modifying, or retarding existing symptoms (2) mediating disturbed patterns of behavior and (3) promoting positive personality growth and development (Walberg, 1977).

Psychotherapy consists of two people sitting in a room talking. At least one of these people is trained in helping people to change. At least one has something about their life that they want to change.

Technique of Therapy to Treat Mental Illness

- *Therapy for Psychological problems :*

Therapy is a very effective treatment for psychological and emotional problems. A good therapist knows how to listen, helps the client to identify and understand self-defeating thoughts and behaviors, encourages client to make positive changes and motivates client to learn and grow.

- *Therapist and Client Relationship:*

Therapy is a partnership. Both client and therapist contribute to the healing process. Client should not expect to do the work of recovery all by therapists, but therapist can't do it for the client either. Therapy should feel like collaboration.

Therapy will not always feel pleasant. Painful memories, frustrations or feelings might surface. This is a normal part of therapy and therapist has to guide client through this process. Client should communicate with therapists about his/her feelings. Therapy should be in a safe place.

- *First Therapy Session:*

   The therapist may ask for a Psychological and physical health history. Therapist may try to connect rapport with the client.

- *Duration of therapy :*

   Everyone's treatment is different. The time for therapy depends on many factors and differs from person to person.

- *Making most of therapy:*

   Therapist can help, guide client and make suggestions for treatment, but only client can make the changes to move forward. The client should make a commitment for treatment. The client should not skip sessions unless it's absolutely have to.

   Client needs to share feeling with therapist. Then only client can get the most out of therapy if client is open and honest about feelings with therapist.

- *Cessation of therapy:*

   When to stop therapy depends on client and individual situation.

   Leaving therapy can be difficult. The therapeutic relationship is a strong bond, and ending careful of this relationship is important.

Review of literature

The following are some of the studies related to psychotherapy and mental health. Weisz, Doss and Hawley (2005) reviewed 236 studies tested 383 treatments and included 427 treatment control comparisons, spanning the years 1962 through 2002. Through the analysis they reported that considerable breadth, diversity, and rigor in the measurement approaches were used to assess participant characteristic and treatment out comes. The reporting on important sample characteristics showed major gaps, and more than half the studies failed to use well-standardized procedures to ensure appropriate sample selection. Because sample size left most studies underpowered, and procedures to enhance treatment fidelity were generally weak, many of the treatments investigated may do have received fair tests. The authors felt that studies were particularly weak in clinical representativeness of their samples, therapists, and settings, suggesting a need for increased emphasis on external validity in youth treatment research.

With regard to studies in Indian Context Manickam (2010) reviewed articles related to different areas of psychotherapy. The review showed that publications of papers related to psycho-social interventions in general and behavior therapy in particular in Indian journals of Psychiatry was found to be limited. It was reported that though, the first paper related to behavior therapy was published in 1952, a manual search of all available issues of the journal from 1949, showed that only 42 papers related to behavior therapy have been published till 2009. Among them 10 are case reports. Methodological limitations abound even in the papers on larger groups of patients. Studies using operant conditioning have been very few. Aversion therapy and progressive muscle relaxation have been very frequently used. It was reported that publications in the recent years have been mostly on cognitive behaviour therapy. Time and budgetary comtrainty often are limiting the resources to conduct more research in this area.

Mental illness and Stigma

The need for psychological services like psychotherapy is enormous in recent years. Despite advances, mental health professionals are not likely to reduce the prevalence, incidence

and burden of mental illness. The main reason being stigma attached towards mental-illness and towards people suffering from mental health problems.

It is human nature to fear what we donot understand. As such mental illness is feared by many people and unfortunately still caries a stigma and many people hesitate to get help from psychiatric or psychological help.

Usually a lot of stigma in attached to mental illness, their stems from structures in society and from individual attitudes and behaviors. When compared to Western countries, in Asia there is a widespread tendency to stigmatize and discriminate people with mental illness. Stigma discriminates and awareness can seriously affect the health and wealth of life of people with mental health problems. Both individuals and structures need to be changed by legal reforms, public education from grass-root level.

The challenge of eliminating stigma towards mental health problems can be decreased by using certain criteria (Example**: STOP** criteria)

- **S**tereotype attitudes towards mental illness should be removed.

- **T**rivializing of people with mental illness should be stopped.

- **O**ffending people with mental health problems should be discouraged.

- **P**atronizing the persons with mental health problems should be done through policies.

    Other methods are:

- Mass media campaigns to make a positive shift in knowledge and attitudes towards mental health. Particularly television can be used as a major source for information and images on mental health.

- Celebration of days like *"Mental Health Day"* can be promoted.

Every one is likely to have to deal with mental illness at sometime within family member, work colleagues or ourselves. In the context of increasing number of mental health problems and less

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number of services available and limited research available in Indian context, there is a need to increase personal and financial resources with regard to mental health research and Services.

Conclusion:

Mental health refers to a person's cognitive, and /or emotional well being. It is all about how one thinks feels and behaves. Mental health can affect daily life relationships and even physical health. Psychological interventions to treat mental health issues have developed remarkably in the past few decades and techniques like psychotherapy are used to treat mental health problem. Despite advances, mental health professionals are likely to reduce the prevalence, incidence and burden of mental illness mainly due to stigma. Hence, the Government and voluntary organization should promote strategies to eliminate stigma towards Mental illness and visiting mental health professionals. When compared to mental health services in western countries very limited services are provided in Indian context. Policy makers should consider these aspects while allotting budget to these services.

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