

MENTAL ILLNESS (DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY)

Q. Define the Mental illness.

Ans: A mental disorder (also referred to as mental disorder) is characterized by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behavior (or a combination of these). It is usually associated with distress or impairment in important areas of functioning.

A mental illness is also characterized by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behavior, often in a social context.

Q. What are the different signs & symptoms of mental illness?

Ans: Signs and symptoms of mental illness can vary, depending on the disorder, circumstances and other factors. Some of the symptoms are given as below:

- Feeling sad or down
- Confused thinking or reduced ability to concentrate
- Excessive fears or worries, or extreme feelings of guilt
- Extreme mood changes of highs and lows
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Significant tiredness, low energy or problems sleeping
- Detachment from reality (delusions), paranoia or hallucinations
- Inability to cope with daily problems or stress
- Trouble understanding and relating to situations and to people
- Problems with alcohol or drug use
- Major changes in eating habits
- Sex drive changes
- Excessive anger, hostility or violence
- Suicidal thinking

Sometimes symptoms of a mental health disorder appear as physical problems, such as stomach pain, back pain, headaches, or other unexplained aches and pains.

Q. What are the different types of mental illness?

Ans: There are many different types (or categories) of mental disorders. They are pointed as below:

(1) Anxiety disorders:

♣ **Definition:** Anxiety disorders are a cluster of mental disorders characterized by:

- significant and uncontrollable feelings of anxiety and fear,
- physical and cognitive symptoms, such as restlessness, irritability, easy fatigue, difficulty concentrating, increased heart rate, chest pain, abdominal pain, and a variety of other symptoms that may vary based on the individual.

♣ **Signs & symptoms:** It may include: feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge; worrying excessively; difficulty concentrating; restlessness; and irritability.

♣ **Subtypes:** There are several types of anxiety disorders, namely:

- (i) generalized anxiety disorder,
- (ii) hypochondriasis,
- (iii) specific phobia,
- (iv) social anxiety disorder,
- (v) separation anxiety disorder,
- (vi) agoraphobia,
- (vii) panic disorder, and
- (viii) selective mutism.

♣ **Diagnosis:** The diagnosis of anxiety disorders is made by symptoms, triggers, and a person's personal and family histories. There are no objective biomarkers or laboratory tests that can diagnose anxiety.

Numerous questionnaires have been developed for clinical use and can be used for an objective scoring system.

Another important aspect of diagnosis of an anxiety disorder requires first ruling out an underlying medical cause. Diseases that may present similar to an anxiety disorder include certain endocrine diseases (like hypo-&-hyperthyroidism, hyperprolactinemia), metabolic disorders (like diabetes) etc.

♣ **Prevention:** There is tentative evidence to support the use of cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness therapy.

It is to be noted that, avoidance of several drugs which can also cause or worsen anxiety, whether through intoxication, withdrawal, or chronic use. These include alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, sedatives, opioids (like heroin), stimulants (such as caffeine, cocaine, and amphetamines), hallucinogens, and inhalants.

♣ **Treatment:**

(a) *Psychological techniques:* There are several psychological techniques for treatment of anxiety disorder, such as:

- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT),
- Exposure and response prevention (ERP)
- Mindfulness-based programs
- Transcendental meditation etc.

(b) *Medications:* First-line choices for medications include SSRIs (Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) or SNRIs (Serotonin–norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors) to treat generalized anxiety disorder. SSRIs such as Fluoxetine, sertraline, and paroxetine can also help with some forms of anxiety in children and adolescents.

Buspirone and pregabalin are second-line treatments for people who do not respond to SSRIs.

(c) *Lifestyle & diet:* Lifestyle changes include exercise, regularizing sleep patterns, reducing caffeine intake, and stopping smoking. Omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (such as fish oil),

foods rich in zinc (such as oysters, cashews, liver, beef, and egg yolks) have been linked to lowered anxiety.

(2) Depression:

♣ **Definition:** Depression is short-lived emotional responses to challenges in everyday life. During a depressive episode, the person experiences depressed mood (feeling sad, irritable, empty) or a loss of pleasure or interest in activities, for most of the day / nearly every day / for at least two weeks.

♣ **Signs & symptoms:** Several symptoms are present, which may include

- poor concentration,
- feelings of excessive guilt or low self-worth,
- hopelessness about the future,
- thoughts about dying or suicide,
- disrupted sleep,
- changes in appetite or weight, and
- feeling especially tired or low in energy etc.

♣ **Subtypes:** Diagnosticians recognize several subtypes of depression, namely:

- *Atypical depression* (AD) [characterized by positivity, increased appetite, excessive sleep, significant weight gain etc]
- *Melancholic depression* [characterized by a loss of pleasure, excessive weight loss, or excessive guilt etc].
- *Psychotic depression* [characterized by psychotic symptoms such as delusions or, less commonly, hallucinations].
- *Premenstrual dysphoric disorder* (PMDD) [characterized by cluster of affective, behavioral and somatic symptoms that recur monthly during the luteal phase of the menstrual cycle].

Besides there are other types of depression also, such as:

- Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)
- Dysthymia
- Depressive personality disorder (DPD)
- Double depression etc.

♣ **Cause:**

(i) Recent studies specifies that depression results when a preexisting vulnerability (or diathesis) is activated by stressful life events. The preexisting vulnerability can be either genetic or schematic (resulting from views of the world learned in childhood).

(ii) Other studies have indicated that a triad of automatic and spontaneous negative thoughts about the self, the world or environment, and the future may lead to other depressive signs and symptoms.

♣ **Diagnosis:**

- (i) A diagnostic assessment may be conducted by a suitably trained general practitioner, or by a psychiatrist or psychologist, who records the person's current circumstances, biographical history, current symptoms, family history, and alcohol and drug use.
- (ii) The assessment also includes a mental state examination, which is an assessment of the person's current mood and thought content, in particular the presence of themes of hopelessness or pessimism, self-harm or suicide, and an absence of positive thoughts or plans.
- (iii) To know the severity of symptoms for a time period, Rating scales (such as Suicide Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised or Beck Depression Inventory etc) are used.
- (iv) Physical examination is also done.

♣ **Management:**

- The most common and effective treatments for depression are psychotherapy (like talking therapy), medication, and electroconvulsive therapy (ECT); a combination of treatments is the most effective approach when depression is resistant to treatment.
- Antidepressant medication is recommended as an initial treatment choice in people with mild, moderate, or severe major depression.
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and interpersonal therapy may help prevent depression.
- Lifestyle changes like exercise, regularizing sleep patterns, reducing caffeine intake, and stopping smoking can reduce depression.

Beside above two (anxiety & depression) there are other types of mental illness, such as:

Psychotic disorder,
Bipolar Disorder,
Personality disorder,
Eating disorder,
Sleep disorder etc.
