

SAMHS INFO BULLETIN

Compiled by Corporate Communication



Mental Illness Awareness Month 01 – 31 July 2013

What is mental illness and what is mental health?

The month July had been declared Mental Health Awareness month with the objective of not only educating the public about mental health but also to reduce the stigma and discrimination that people with mental illness are often subjected.

What causes mental illness?

Although the exact cause of most mental illness is not known, it is becoming clear through research that many of those conditions are caused by a combination of biological, psychological and environmental factors.

What biological factors are involved in mental illnesses?

Some mental illness has been linked to an abnormal balance of special chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters. If these chemicals are out of balance or are not working properly, messages may not make it through the brain correctly, leading to symptoms of mental illness. In addition, defects in or injury to certain areas of the brain have also been linked to some mental conditions.

Some symptoms of mental illness:

- Overwhelmed by fear or worry
- Depressed mood
- Confused thinking
- Trouble dealing with stress
- Suicidal thoughts
- Severe anxiety
- Problems sleeping
- Distance from friends and family
- Paranoia

Psychological factors that may contribute to mental illness include:

- Severe psychological trauma suffered as a child, such as emotional, physical or sexual abuse
- An important early loss, such as loss of parent
- Neglect
- Poor ability to relate to others
- Severe traumatic experience causing post traumatic depression

Certain stressors can trigger an illness in person who is susceptible to mental illness: these stressors include:

- Death or divorce
- A dysfunctional family life
- Feeling of inadequacy, low self-esteem, anxiety, anger or loneliness
- Changing jobs and schools
- Substance abuse by the person or the person's parents.

NB: Treatment include medical, psychological and social support, as well as spiritual support by chaplains.

Approved by:
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