"MENTAL ILLNESS: AN INVISIBLE TRAUMA"

SOFIA KHANAM

Department of Pharmacology, Calcutta Institute of Pharmaceutical Technology and Allied Health Science, Uluberia, Howrah-711316, West Bengal, India

What Is Mental Illness?

A mental health disorder is defined as any condition that affects a person's thoughts, behaviors or moods. While some mental health disorders last for a limited period, others are chronic and lifelong. When these issues cause high levels of stress or affect their daily functioning or relationships, treatment may be necessary to help a person manage their symptoms.

Common Mental Illnesses

Causes of Mental Illness

Although the exact cause of most mental illnesses is unknown, most develop as the result of a combination of biological, psychological and environmental factors.

Some mental illnesses have been linked to abnormal functioning of the brain due to chemical imbalances, injuries or developmental abnormalities. Mental illnesses sometimes run in families, suggesting that genetics also plays a role. Other links to mental health disorders include:

- ✓ **Long-term substance abuse**
- ✓ **Poor nutrition and exposure to toxins**
- ✓ **Undergoing severe psychological trauma as a child, including emotional, physical or sexual abuse**
- ✓ **Death or divorce**
- ✓ **Dysfunctional family life**
- ✓ **Feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, anxiety, anger or loneliness**
- ✓ **Social or cultural expectations**
- ✓ **Substance abuse**

DID YOU KNOW? / OVER 20% OF YOUNG ADULTS HAVE A MENTAL ILLNESS

Diagnosing Mental Illness

Physicians will typically check for related complications while diagnosing a mental health disorder and perform:

- ✓ **Physical exams to rule out any physical problems that could be causing the symptoms**
- ✓ **Lab tests to evaluate body processes or screen for alcohol and drugs**
- ✓ **Psychological evaluation to assess mental illness symptoms, thoughts, feelings and behavior patterns**

Mental Illness Stigma

Some individuals still view mental illnesses as threatening. These views can lead to various forms of exclusion and discrimination for people with mental health problems.
Some of the additional harmful effects of stigma can include:

- ✓ **Reluctance to seek help or treatment**
- ✓ **Lack of understanding by family, friends, co-workers or others**
- ✓ **Trouble securing housing**
- ✓ **Bullying, physical violence or harassment**
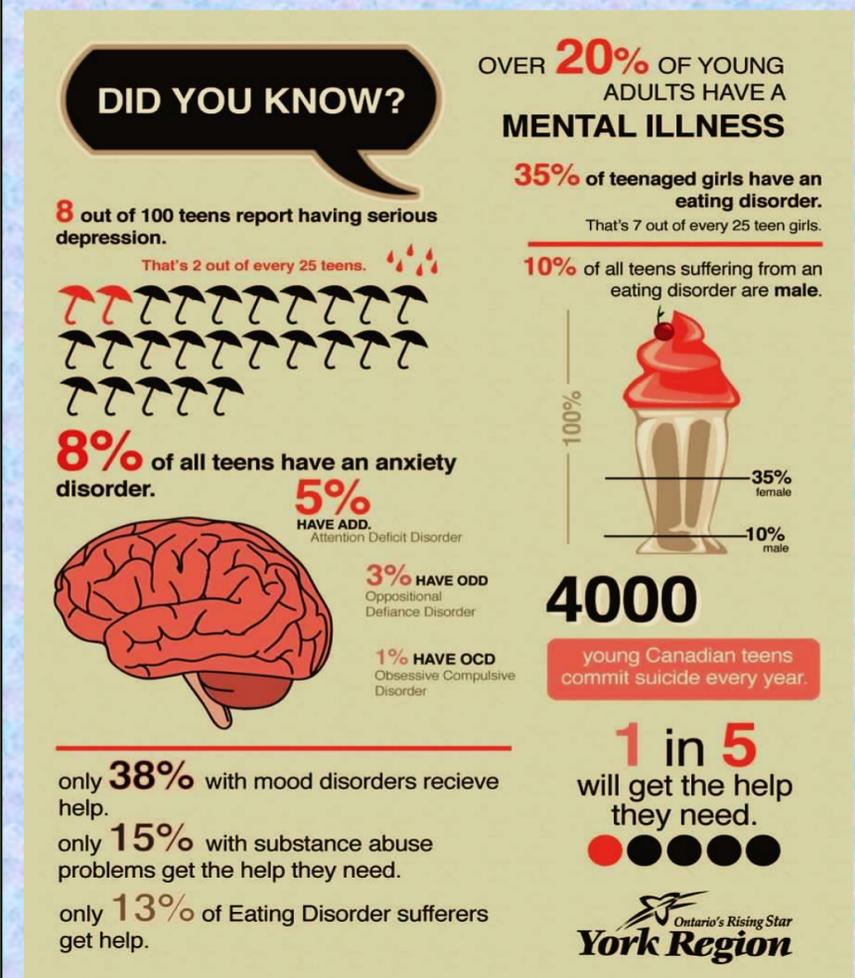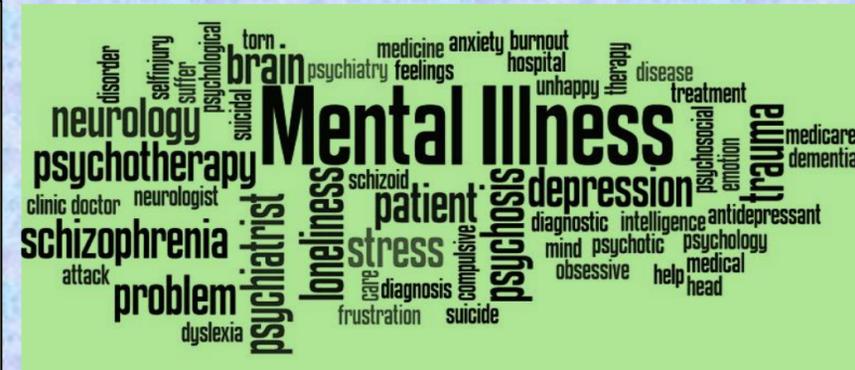
Mental Health Treatment

Treatments may vary depending on the type of mental health disorder a person has. However, mental health care almost always involves some form of psychiatric counseling. Medications may also be prescribed.

MENTAL ILLNESS