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Editorial Comment: World Health Day 2017

BHUVANDEEP GUPTA

Destroy what destroys you. Be strong and beat depression!!

I feel proud and exhilarated in writing this guest column for International Healthcare Research Journal (IHRJ). I am thankful to the team of IHRJ in giving me this opportunity to write this column.

World Health Day, celebrated on 7th April every year marks the founding anniversary of the World Health Organization (WHO), and provides us with a unique opportunity to focus our attentions and actions around a specific health related topic of concern among healthcare professionals across the globe. Each year, a theme is selected that highlights a priority area of public health for the year. This theme provides an opportunity for community members to get involved in activities that can lead to better health (health education, patient motivation, camps, etc). The World Health Day theme for this year focuses on 'Depression'. And is titled as "Depression: let's Talk".¹ Global estimates report that around 350 million people of all ages and from all walks of life suffer from depression.

The WHO describes depression as "A common mental disorder, characterized by sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, feelings of tiredness, and poor concentration".² However, it differs from sadness as depression is an illness that is life altering and more complicated. People experience it differently, and sadness is just one component whereas, depression results from a complex interaction of social, psychological and biological factors of an individual. It can be due to various reasons

like grief, bereavement, loneliness, social stigma, peer pressure, trauma, inability to achieve the desired result, illness that can be life-threatening in nature and so on.

Depression is of the following types:³

- **Major depression:** Noticeable symptoms. Either people sleep less or more, miss school or work, are unable to enjoy/appreciate life and remain sad, and it even may be at a point of suicide.
- **Persistent depressive disorder:** This occurs when low mood lasts for more days but not for more than 2 years. Symptoms are less severe.
- **Postpartum depression (PPD):** Symptoms are debilitating and occur in approximately 10 to 15 percent of new mothers, and up to 18 months to 2 years following childbirth.
- **Seasonal affective disorder (SAD):** Symptoms follow seasonal cycles, and depression is usually seen in cold, grey winter months.

However, depression is treatable. It requires efforts from the community members and the individual itself. The major treatment modalities are various **therapies** (talk therapy, behavioral therapy, inter-personal therapy and problem solving therapy), **medications** (anti-depressants), and **lifestyle changes** (exercise, nutrition, sleep, social support and reduction in stress).

It also becomes the duty of a doctor to look for signs of depression in his patients and treat them accordingly or refer them to a better qualified professional so that the global

burden of this illness can be reduced and we can dream of a depression free-world.

Let there be a happy and a depression- free society...

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Reader

Department of Public Health Dentistry
ITS Dental College, Hospital and Research Centre
Greater Noida
+91 9650757561
bhuvandentist@gmail.com