

Case Report

Role of mental health professionals during COVID-19 outbreak: a case report

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ABSTRACT

The present study is based on experience of a person, who had quarantined with her family members. The present study attempts to highlight the how mental health of a 30 years old, female, housewife got affected due to pandemic and role of psychotherapies in the management of her depression and anxiety symptoms. She was treated with multitherapeutic approach. To treat her, at first detail case-history was taken and mental status examination was done through a telephonic interview. A single case design with pre-and post-assessments on self-administered scale was adopted. Score on Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) indicates severe level of depression, anxiety. Psychotherapies in particular, psycho-education, family therapy, cognitive behavior therapy were applied both on her and family members for a period of two months, after which she recovered. The study result shows the effectiveness and essential need of psychological services in treatment of depression and anxiety during pandemic.

Keywords: *Pandemic, Quarantine, Depression, Anxiety, Stress, Psychotherapies*

Pandemic is a very serious issue for the mankind. Bio-psycho-social process of human beings get affected by this. COVID-19 pandemic affected individual from all over the world (Zhang et al., 2020). Mental distress increased among general public as well as frontline medical workers (Kang et al., 2020; Qiu et al., 2020). Gender, social support, specific experience with COVID-19 infection, length of isolation and amount of exposure to media could be attributable to various factors of vulnerability to psychological distress (Brooks et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020). As short-term effect people suffer from negative emotion e.g., anxiety, depression and anger (Kane et al., 2018), whereas long term effect includes post-traumatic stress disorder, phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder depression and substance abuse (Inoue et al., 2019; Reifels et al., 2019). Social support was effective for improving sleep quality of frontline health worker of this pandemic (Xiao et al., 2020). Cognitive behavior therapy has also been proved to be effective in treating bipolar disorder even after the failure of electroconvulsive therapy (Loo et al., 2016). A meta-analytic study by (Cuijpers et al., 2013) also shows that psychotherapy is very much needed for individuals suffering from depression and anxiety disorder.

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Due to COVID-19 outbreak mental illness related symptoms are rising among general population. So, here our objective is to show how one person's mental health got affected by this pandemic and the role of mental health professional in reducing her symptoms as well as improving her mental health.

CASE REPORT

Case summary

Mrs. A, 30 years old female, married, continuing her study in B.Ed. multi-lingual, brought up in a semi-urban area in a family of upper middle socio-economic status had unknowingly come into contact with one positive detected case of COVID-19. Though she was asymptomatic, as per the government rule she stayed in a Govt. quarantine center for 14-days with her family members e.g., 1 son aged about 7years, 1 daughter aged about 6 years, 1 elder sister aged 33 years, nephew aged about 12years and niece age about 8 years. But on telephonic interview she expressed that she had no expectation that she might suffer from this. As she had already viewed various videos in social media on how COVID-19 is dangerous to human being, it again triggered her negative mood. The next cause of her strain was regarding the age range of her children, nephew and niece. Due to the continuous information from media and mobile caller tune regarding how vulnerable children are, her mood was already low. Except this, as she got to know that she with her family members have to stay in quarantine center all of a sudden, at first, she couldn't believe what was going on as it was beyond her expectation. It was difficult to let the younger children understand the situation, which was another reason of her emotional turmoil. Again, suddenly deciding to come with which daily essential was difficult without having any idea about upcoming days e.g., particular environment, daily use facility etc.

The quarantine center was far from town. A completely new environment and with some unknown govt workers in soundings was difficult to cope. On initial days it was very fearful impact on her. But the facility given by govt worker was quite better for which she could survive. During that period various thought was automatically coming into her mind e.g., I had done something in my previous life for which I am suffering now as a punishment from God. She was not able to give importance on dressing and looks like previous. She was feeling like crying whenever she was establishing and maintaining eye contact with her sister. Most of time she was sitting in a same posture. But she was cooperative to the staffs of quarantine period. The degree of effort toward engaging in social contact through technology was decreased. Psychomotor activity was decreased. Most of the time she was talking very less in a decrease tone, rate, volume with a delay. She also reported that she was feeling sad most of the days, preoccupied about the cause of stay in quarantine period and what will be the COVID-19 screening test. She was feeling difficulty in concentrating.

Especially the night before getting the test result, she could not sleep and very anxious and nervous. But there was no counsellor or psychologist available to provide psychological help. At the end of the day when she knew that she tested negative, it was a little bit relaxing moment for her. But some negative thought was still coming in to her mind i.e., will the society respond to me favorably?

Assessment of symptoms

From clinical interview it was found that, although her family member was expecting that she will improve after few days, it did not happen. Rather her symptoms were augmented. As recently they had gone through difficult time period, her family members were also

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stressed and they seek professional help from a clinical psychologist only through technology only due to the current pandemic situation. The second author who is also a clinical psychologist measured her symptoms by a self-administered questionnaire, namely, Depression, anxiety stress scale (DASS). The severity score was high on each domain based on DASS score. The sign and symptoms were cross checked with those family members who are currently staying with her.

Implementation of intervention

Based on pre-therapy assessment, the short-term goals of the intervention were developing a good therapeutic alliance, bringing symptomatic management, increasing activity level, clarifying relationship between decrease appetite, sleep and its effect on life, helping to develop alternative thought, increasing confidence, concentration and coping ability. Long term goals of the intervention were regular follow-up and relapse prevention. The intervention plan was done as per the recommendation of Simos, 2002. Psychotherapies like proper psycho-education in detail, behavior analysis, family therapy were applied both on her as well as on her family members, while cognitive behavior therapy, activity scheduling, socialization throughout therapy to decrease helplessness, homework were applied on her only in collaboration with the psychiatric social worker.

The therapy was administered in 16 sessions of one-hour duration over 8 weeks with proving rational of each technique to patient and informant. Initially they were educated about nature of illness, course, causal factors and treatment available for the illness. She was told that having mental illness symptoms does not mean that it will remain lifelong as part of his personality. She was informed that it results when individual is not able to cope effectively with stressful situations as a result certain changes in body, behavior, emotion and personality occur, which is temporary in nature. Once the coping is developed, she will come to see that her emotions and behavior will come under normal range. Behavior analysis techniques were used to better understand the process of symptom augmentation and to better understand and planning of the intervention strategies. She and her family members were explained about the predisposing factor, precipitating factors and maintaining factors that caused the problem. This was done to convey them about the therapist conceptualization of her problem. It will facilitate cooperation of the patient in treatment process. The problem areas identified will increase patient's understanding and awareness of her problem. He will be able to understand his treatment in better way.

Symptomatic management were done by telling family members to be attentive and to focus their five-sense organ on the patient and her activities. They were taught how to make her get engaged in her favorite activities. Homework was given to do in between session, especially to identifying automatic thoughts and developing an alternative thought.

Socialization throughout therapy had done by attributing the positive changes to the patient's own efforts. In the next session, the activity schedule was prepared discussing with the patient after finishing the behavior analysis. By this therapist made initial analysis of problem behavior, clarification of problem situation, motivational, developmental analysis, analysis of self-control and relevant social relationship and socio-cultural and physical environment.

Regular psycho-education sessions on onset, duration, course, prognosis of the symptoms, efficacy of intervention, managing her at home, coping with the current scenario, dealing

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with personal stigma as well as social stigma (if shown) were given in different sessions to family members for enhancing family support.

After weekly 2 session for 2 months, her symptoms improved significantly. But hopefully the reaction of friends, relatives and neighbors was very empathetic. She started to call her friends without showing personal stigma. Family members were taught about possibility of relapse and how to manage that in a clear statement. They also suggested to take professional help including psychiatrist if need arises.

RESULTS

After 2 days of coming back to home her symptoms further increased. So, her family member contacted the researcher, who is also a clinical psychologist. the role of psychiatric social worker trainee in the management of this case was also very significant. Case history, mental status and DASS result indicates that her active symptoms were sadness, loss of interest in any recreational activities., worthlessness, change in appetite, decreases sleeping, feel like crying, blaming her-self, meaningless life. Depression, anxiety stress scale – 21 (DASS21) was used to measure the severity of depression, anxiety and stress. On DASS scale the total score 36 on depression domain was suggestive of extremely severe depression, score 16 on anxiety domain was indicating severe level of anxiety and score 10 on stress domain was suggesting normal level of stress. After providing intervention for around two months through technology the clinical psychologist again measured the symptom severity. But score at that time was in normal level.

DISCUSSION

The COVID – 19 pandemics increasing the rate of psychological crises (Xiang et al., 2020). Severe epidemic affects the mental status of people for which symptoms like insomnia, anxiety and depression increases (Chen et al., 2006). To decrease symptoms and improve mental health, various psychological services are essential. Among them, cognitive therapy is based on the cognitive model, which hypothesizes that people's emotions and behaviors are influenced by their perception of events. It is not a situation in and of itself that determines what people feel but rather the way in which they interpret a situation (Beck, 1967). Behavioral techniques were effective in normalizing the day-to-day activities and family therapy is very essential for improving communication pattern in the family (Sadock & Sadock, 2011). In the index case also, it has occurred.

The case illustration show how mental state gets affected by COVID-19. As there are very limited case reports on those stayed in Government quarantine center for COVID-19 due to coming into in to contact with positive detected case. The present case study is beneficial to understand the mental psychological states in a deeper level. The outcome of psychotherapies in respect to management of depression and anxiety has been encouraging as revealed by various researchers. The findings of this study highlight the role of psychotherapies in the management of depression and anxiety effectiveness in normalizing the day-to-day activities.

Mrs. A, was brought up in a very good environment starting from her life up to the present condition. But 14 days of quarantine stay and the repeated information from the media regarding vulnerability factors and the question of whether she will get societal acceptance in future or not, and fear of victimization was making her severely depressed, anxious. Patient was found functioning normally after two months of follow-up. Although both the measurement of the symptom severity and intervention was provided through technology,

still it was quite effective with a little slow in process. This case report indicates towards the ill effect of COVID-19 on the mental health. It also shows the efficacy of intervention through technology on depressed and anxious person during pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Mental status worsens during pandemic. So continuous examination of both physical and mental status of those affected by COVID-19 are needed. Although very few symptom manifestations of depression, anxiety and stress may be normal during pandemic outbreak, still severe level of these symptoms are indicating toward mental illness and urgent need of psychological interventions by mental health professionals.

So, in the journey of life sometimes or other someone may depress or anxious during pandemic. But we do not lose our hope. Psychologist try to extend their helping hands to give some magic remedy by cognitively developing the mindset through finding a way to live meaningful and successful life.

The present study highlights the efficacy of psychotherapies in person suffering from depression and anxiety symptoms during COVID-19 outbreak. But, as it is a single case study with a short-term follow-up, there is need to carry out research on large sample. So, a long-term follow-up is needed to evaluate the efficacy of the psychotherapies during pandemic.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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