

AN OPINION SURVEY ABOUT THE CAUSES AND TREATMENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND THE SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE MENTALLY ILL PATIENTS

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SUMMARY

In the present study assessment of Public Opinion of two groups, relatives and non-relatives attending the out patient department with the patients, were done. Analysis of the data revealed that both groups held heredity as the cause of mental illness and both groups preferred, significantly the efficacy of Psychiatric treatment like E.C.T. and drugs to that of Homoeopathic and Ayurvedic treatment, Magic and faith healing procedure, not preferred to any significant extent. Regarding efficacy of treatment of the mentally ill we find that significantly more number of relatives did favour E.C.T. and drugs. Psychotherapy has yet to make a mark.

It has been observed that the general public often have very poor idea about the causation and treatment of mental illness. It is also seen that some kind of social stigma and belief in supernatural causation of illness held within a community may profoundly influence in forming opinions about the mentally-ill.

In recent years, the knowledge of Psychiatry has made considerable advancement and it has been seen that mental diseases like any other illness can be treated. But Psychiatry often faces considerable opposition in applying these measures for the benefit of the sick. Since the opposition is demonstrated by the Community, a study on 'public opinion' in respect of causes and treatment of mental illness and the social acceptance of the mentally ill-patients was considered necessary.

Procedure :

In the present investigation, an attempt to survey the public opinion of a group of people who attended the out patients' department of R. G. Kar, Medical College

Hospital, with their ailing relatives, was made. For this purpose data was collected from 240 persons who were relatives of these patients and 120 persons who were relatives of non-psychiatric patients, attending the O. P. D. (other than Psychiatric O.P.D.) of the same Medical College Hospital. In each case only one adult relative considered to be the closest to the patient was selected.

Questionnaires specially designed for this study were administered to investigate the opinion of the relatives and non-relatives.

The questionnaires were based to elicit the opinions of the respective relatives about the role of heredity in the production of mental illness, efficacy of the different forms of treatment procedures, scientific and unscientific, to mental illness and social acceptance of the mentally ill-patients.

Moreover the relatives of the psychiatric patients were asked certain questions pertaining to the patient in addition to the common questions for all subjects. Each subject had to choose 'Yes', 'No' or 'Uncertain'. The mean age of the male relatives

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was 34.2 years and that of female relatives was 33.3 years, and the mean age of non-relatives were, male 33.6 yrs and female 32.2 yrs. Education and socio-economic condition of both the groups were matched.

The results of this investigation were tabulated and expressed in percentage, significance of the results among different answering categories of each factor between relatives and non-relatives was seen.

RESULTS

Data of the present investigation have been arranged in percentages, under aetiology, treatment and social acceptance.

TABLE I

	Yes	No	Uncertain
Relative	210 (87.5)	24 (10)	6 (2.5)
Non-relative	68 (56.6)	40 (33.3)	12 (10)

It was observed that 87.5% of the relatives and 56.6% of the non-relatives attributed the cause to heredity.

Intragroup responses were significant beyond .01 level and inter-group responses, i.e. differences in responses between relatives and non-relatives were also significant beyond .01 level.

Treatment : The effect of various treatment modalities is given in Table II.

(a) Effect of E.C.T. :

70% of the relatives and 56.6% of the non-relatives were in favour of E.C.T. 20% of the relatives and 33.3% of the non-relatives were not in favour of E.C.T. while 10% of both relatives and non-relatives did not know much about E.C.T.

(b) Effect of Psychotherapy :

11.6% of the relatives and 33.3% of the non-relatives were in favour of Psychotherapy, 11.6% of the relatives and 13.3% of the non-relatives were not in

TABLE II—Effect of Treatment modalities

	Yes	No	Uncertain
<i>ECT</i> :			
Relative	168(70.0)	48(20.0)	24(10.0)
Non-Relative	68(56.6)	40(33.3)	12(10.0)
Relative vs Non-relative : $p < 0.05$			
<i>Psychotherapy</i>			
Relative	28(11.6)	28(11.6)	184 (76.8)
Non-Relative	40(13.3)	16(13.3)	64(53.4)
Relative vs Relative : $p < 0.01$			
<i>Medicine</i> :			
Relative	180(75)	24(10.0)	36(15.0)
Non-relative	64(53.3)	40(33.3)	16(13.4)
Relative vs Non-relative : $p < 0.01$			
<i>Ayurvedic</i> :			
Relative	120(50.0)	72(30.0)	48(20.0)
Non-relative	52(43.3)	40(33.3)	38(23.4)
Relative vs Non-relative : NS			
<i>Homoeopathic</i> :			
Relative	92(38.3)	96(40.0)	52(21.7)
Non-relative	60(50.0)	36(30.0)	24(20.0)
Relative vs Non-relative : NS			
<i>Effect of Ojha (Faith healer)</i> :			
Relative	86(35.8)	124(51.6)	30(12.6)
Non-relative	20(16.6)	76(63.3)	24(20.0)
Relative vs Non-Relative : $p < 0.01$			
<i>Effect of faithhealing</i> :			
Relative	76(31.6)	140(58.3)	24(10.0)
Non-relative	64(53.3)	32(26.7)	34(20.0)
Relative vs Non-relative : $p < 0.01$			
<i>Effect of Marriage</i>			
Relative	168(70.0)	48(20.0)	24(10.0)
Non-relative	64(73.3)	28(23.3)	28(23.3)
Relative vs non-relative : $p < 0.01$			

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

favour of psychotherapy while 76.8% of relatives and 53.4% of non-relatives did not recognise psychotherapy as a method of treatment and as such the role or effect as well.

(c) Effect of Medicines :

75% of the relatives and 53.3% of the non-relatives were in favour of the drug

treatment, 10% of the relatives and 33.3% of the non-relatives were not in favour of the treatment while 15% of the relatives and 13.4% of the non-relatives did not have familiarity with the effects.

Difference in responses among the relatives and non-relatives i.e. intra-group differences were significant beyond .01 level and that of inter group were significant beyond .01 level. But X^2 values of the responses in the relatives were more than that of non-relatives and between the relatives and non-relatives.

(d) *Efficacy of Ayurvedic form of treatment :*

50% of the relatives and 43.3% of the non-relatives were in favour, 30% of the relatives and 33.3% of the non-relatives were not in favour while 20% of the relatives and 23.4% of the non-relatives did not know the effect of treatment.

(e) *Efficacy of Homoeopathy :*

38.3% of the relatives and 50% of the non-relatives were in favour, 40% of the relatives and 30% of the non-relatives were not in favour, while 21.7% of the relatives and 20% of the non-relatives were uncertain about the treatment.

(f) *Effect of Ojha (Magic healer) :*

35.8% of the relatives and 16.6% of the non-relatives were in favour, 51.6% of the relatives and 63.3% of the non-relatives were not in favour while 12.6% of the relatives and 20% of the non-relatives were uncertain about the effect of this treatment.

(g) *Effect of faith healing :*

31.6% of the relatives and 53.3% of the non-relatives were in favour, 58.3% of the relatives and 26.7% of the non-relatives were not in favour while 10% of the relatives and 20% of the non-relatives were uncertain about the possible effect of this treatment.

(h) *Effect of Marriage :*

70% of the relatives and 53.3% of the non-relatives were in favour, 20% of the relatives and 23.3% of the non-relatives were not in favour, while 10% of the relatives and 23.3% of the non-relatives were uncertain about the effect of marriage on mental patients.

TABLE-III (a)—*Acceptance through marriage*

	Yes	No	Uncertain
Relative	54(22.6)	180(75.0)	6(2.4)
Non-relative	28(23.3)	76(63.3)	16(13.3)

Relative vs Non-relative : $p < 0.01$

It is seen from the Table that 75% of the relatives and 63.3% of the non-relatives were not in favour of marrying the cured mentally ill-patients.

TABLE-III (b)—*Agree to marry in a family of the diseased*

	Yes	No	Uncertain
Relative	90(37.5)	126(52.5)	24(10.0)
Non-relative	40(33.3)	60(50.0)	20(16.7)

Relative vs Non-relative : N.S.

It appeared from Table-III (b) that 52.5% of the relatives and 50% of the non-relatives were not in favour to marry or negotiate with a member from a family where there was mental illness.

TABLE-III (c)—*Acceptance through allowance to have a child of a cured mentally ill-patient.*

	Yes	No	Uncertain
Relative	99(37.5)	84(55.0)	66(27.5)
Non-relative	36(30.0)	64(53.3)	20(16.7)

Relative vs Non-relative : $p < 0.01$

37.5% of the relatives and 30% of the non-relatives were in favour while 35% of the relatives and 53.3% of the non-

relatives were not in favour of having a child of cured mentally ill-patients.

TABLE-III (d)—*Acceptance through Job*

	Yes	No	Uncertain
Relative	240(100)	0	0
Non-relative	120(100)	0	0

Both the groups were in favour of giving job to cured mental patients.

TABLE III (e)—*Opinion regarding the treatment of excited mentally ill patients at home as against treatment at hospital*

	Hospital	Home
Relative	240(100)	0
Non-relative	120(100)	0

The results showed that both groups preferred hospitalisation of excited patients.

TABLE III (f)—*Opinion regarding the treatment of non-excited patient at home against hospitalisation*

	Hospital	Home
Relative	90(37.5)	150(62.5)
Non-relative	52(43.3)	68(56.7)

Relative vs non-relative : N.S.
(Figures in Parenthesis indicate percentage)

It appeared from Table-III (f) that 62.5% of the relatives and 56.7% of the non-relatives preferred home treatment of the non-excited mental patients.

DISCUSSIONS

It appeared from the results that both groups of subjects considered heredity to be the cause of mental illness, but a significantly greater proportion of relatives attributed 'the cause' to heredity than non-relatives.

As regards the treatment of mental illness, high proportion of relatives and non-relatives preferred modern psychi-

atric treatment, like E.C.T. and drug therapy to Homoeopathic and Ayurvedic form of treatment.

This opinion might have been a biased one as the data were collected from persons attending the allopathic hospital.

Ojha (magic healer) procedure as a form of treatment of mental illness was not accepted by the subjects to any great extent. Although the relatives (58.3%) did not accept faith-healing (other than Ojha) as a form of treatment, the non-relatives (26.7% No) (53.3% Yes) seemed to do so. That the relatives did not favour faith-healing may be attributed to their personal unsuccessful experience

Poor awareness of Psychotherapy as a form of treatment could be due to the extremely limited availability of such a treatment. As regards the acceptance of mentally ill-patients both groups showed reluctance to establish marital relationship between a 'cured' mental patient or a person belonging to the family of such patient and a member of their own family. It was also observed that a higher percentage of non-relatives were reluctant to have children of 'the cured' mentally ill. Both groups preferred hospitalisation of the excited mentally ill-patients. In Table II in which the effect of marriage was also investigated, it was observed that both relatives and non-relatives did favour marriage as a method of cure. This may be due to ideas prevalent in the past that sexual deprivation leads to mental illness.

Moreover, from the questionnaire it is noted that 80% of both the groups attributed the causation to apprehending about financial states, unemployment, stress of bereavement of family members or emotionally upsetting experiences of failure in love, loss of job, failure in examinations, etc. This is a preliminary study and further work is needed to assess other opinion of public in different aspects of life.