

COVID-19 and Depression in Pakistan

Letter:

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a lethal respiratory disease that first appeared in Wuhan, China, at the end of December 2019. The disease was later declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). Since, there is no established treatment for this disease due to the changing nature of corona viruses, the WHO has outlined standard operating procedures (SOPs) to reduce the spread of the disease. Governments in some countries have imposed lockdowns to reduce the spread. These lockdowns have had drastic effects on citizens' mental health, as people have suffered from both fear of the disease and a lack of communication with family and friends.

Depression is a mental illness with severe physical and emotional effects. It causes feelings of sadness and a lack of interest in everything. It may result in the loss of friends, family, or even a job. The longer depression lasts, the more damage it inflicts on the victim's life. Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world.^[1] Anxiety and depression are more common in females than in males.^[2] Patients who are hospitalized due to cardiac disease or diabetes may suffer from depression.^[3] Pakistan's increasing population size means that proper guidelines for handling depression are needed. In Pakistan, closely connected family systems mean that depression is less common than in other countries where most individuals do not have access to such family systems.^[4]

COVID-19 does not only affect physical health; it can also negatively impact psychological health. Since the outbreak of the disease, cases of depression and anxiety have increased. People all over the world have been affected psychologically by the pandemic as it has destroyed the normal pace of human life in many countries.^[5]

While governments and healthcare providers are working to control the COVID-19 pandemic, less attention has been paid to the psychological problems of people who are trapped their homes to avoid contracting COVID-19. Due to a lack of face-to-face communication and social activities, many isolated people are becoming depressed. However, several measures can be taken to help these people. Individuals struggling with depression should take the following steps^[6]:

- Avoid distressing situations.
- Limit exposure to media and news.
- Maintain a healthy relationship with family.
- Regularly communicate with friends via social media.
- Try to think positively.
- If you are afraid of getting COVID-19, share your concerns with family members; this will help you cope with the fear.
- Try to increase your immunity by exercising regularly, getting enough sleep, and practicing relaxation techniques.
- If you have lost a close friend or relative to COVID-19, seek online psychological support services.

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There are no conflicts of interest.

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