

Depression is Real

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Opinion

Depression is the common cold of mental and mood disorders, it has a high prevalence worldwide and it is becoming an international problem affecting all socioeconomic classes and all age groups, based upon the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, released by the American association of psychiatry. Clinical depression is diagnosed by several signs and symptoms to meet the diagnostic criteria, the most important one is the functional impairment made by these symptoms which stops the affected individual from enjoying his everyday life tasks and trap him into a vicious cycle of hopelessness and despair.

The main obstacle we are facing in our society nowadays is that we do not consider depression as a real clinical disorder, and that even involves some of the health care providers, a lot of doctors prefer to order an infinite number of unnecessary investigations instead of considering referring their patients for a psychiatric evaluation, scientific researches has proved that depression is linked to an abnormal balance in the brain chemistry, involving several chemical neurotransmitters more specifically serotonin which strengthens the theory that clinical depression has an actual physical and chemical mechanism and that explains the huge improvement those individuals have when they are treated with medications that alters those chemical reactions in the brain .

I believe that work should start on both individual and society level. Firstly, it is our mission as physicians and health care providers to raise the awareness about the importance of mood disorders to be discovered as early as possible and to realise that these disorders limit the function of the affected individuals in all aspects of life, even the most simple tasks of life like watching a TV programme or taking a walk in the park might feel like a huge burden on them, we need to understand that it is very difficult for people to sympathize with something they do not understand, for example, it sounds very logical to sympathize with a patient with cancer or any other physical

disability but mood disorders are different as it is still being perceived by a fair number of people as a sign of weakness or excessive self-involvement, our work should be emphasised upon bridging the gap between the actual definition of clinical depression and the false public believe of the general population, people need to understand that coping with depression is not an easy task and trying to confront others who suffer with depression by saying all types of clichés like get out more or just stop being sad is not the answer, it is just not that simple, if it was they would have done already.

Moreover, in order to increase the awareness about the importance of diagnosing clinical depression, we need to encounter objective and simple methods that can be used easily by all society members, for instance using anonymous questionnaires would be very uncomplicated and can protect the privacy of the respondents which would make them more comfortable to open up about their internal conflicts, these types of questionnaires should not just be available at the psychiatry clinic, all primary care providers and social workers in educational institutions should be well oriented into using these methods, furthermore, the questions in those questionnaires should match the diagnostic criteria of the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, in fact there is a free online questionnaire called the Patient health questionnaire 9 PHQ-9 made by the Pfizer inc and it is free to download in several languages. In addition, we need to fight against the stigma which has been holding a lot of individuals from talking about depression which makes it too complicated to be diagnosed or treated.

In conclusion, depression is as real as any other physical illness with real clinical signs and symptoms and more importantly with very catastrophic consequences, and we as doctors and physicians should always consider depression at the top list of our differential diagnosis, instead of wasting our patients' time and money by performing all kind of non-invasive and even invasive investigational procedures.