

Battling Mental Health in Older People

One of the articles from the reading of week 10 has touched upon the sensitive issue of mental health in older people. It is a sensitive issue according to me because the transition from middle age to old age is often fraught with immense physical and mental changes in the body. As people age, they start losing their friends and loved ones, and experience changes in their functional abilities. As a result, they grow dependent on people around them leading to the development of several mental and emotional disorders such as depression and anxiety.

A study conducted in America in 2015 showed that around 14% of all aged people had symptoms of depression (Biering, 2018). This is of particular concern because mental health conditions in older people affect their quality of life in relation to other co-morbidities. Given the prevalence of mental health conditions and their effects on older people, it would be natural to assume that several mental health services and healthcare providers are available to address the issue of depression in older people. Sadly, this is not the case. Most mental healthcare services are targeted to the younger population rather than the aged.

My experience with the older population has given me several insights into their thought processes and emotions. I have come to the realization that it is quite difficult for them to voice their concerns and they live in the constant fear that they will be left alone without anyone to take care of them. This leads to them bottling up their emotions and not being able to share them with their loved ones. Eventually, as the years go by, this constant worry and fear leads to the development of anxiety and depression in older people.

Based on research, there have been several proposed approaches to address mental health conditions in older people. Some of them include psychotropic medications, psychosocial interventions, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), and holistic approaches to care (Biering, 2018). Personally, I feel that medication-free approaches should be considered for alleviating depression in older people. This is because the development of emotional and mental issues in the aged occurs due to lack of love and attention in their lives, and this needs to be addressed by filling the gaps in their mental and emotional care.

Several models of care in recent times have started focusing on the interplay between psychological and social factors in the development of mental health issues. In order to address these, several holistic approaches have been proposed that are comprehensive and multi-disciplinary in nature, and integrate social and community-level care in their agenda. Activities aimed at increasing social contacts and introducing appropriate physical exercises in their schedule should show positive outcomes in older people suffering from depression and anxiety.

Reference

Biering, P. (2018). Helpful approaches to older people experiencing mental health problems: A critical review of models of mental health care. *European Journal of Ageing*, 16(2), 215-225.
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