Transcultural psychiatry; culture and ethnicity really matters

Editorial

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Keywords

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Abbreviations

DSM 5 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders; 5th version

CCMD The Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders

ICD 11 The Internatiinal Classification of Diseases; 11th version

Introduction

Culture is the term that refers to a wide and diverse set of aspects of social life that are intangible. It includes all domains which represent the background shared in common by individuals belonging to a society, a group, an institution or an organization and can be used to define them collectively. Such domains consists of values, beliefs, religions, communication, languages, habits, traditions, rituals, customs, norms, ideas, arts, music, cusines and other social practices.

On the other hand, psychiatry is the medical specialty concerned with discussing and studying the etiological origin of mental disorders and their diagnostic criteria as well as practicing their prevention, and treatment.

Transcultural psychiatry

It is the branch of psychiatry concerned with the the different cultural and ethnic contexts of mental disorders and mental health services.

Kleiman (1977) published a paper that was followed by renewal of the dialogue between anthropologists and psychiatrists described as having initiated the concept of the new cross-cultural psychiatry. Such concept have been based on prevalence surveys of different mental disorders and their forms across different cultures and countries. Cross cultural psychiatry has special interest in studying migrant populations and ethnic diversity within the same country and considering psychiatry itsrlf as a cultural product.

Different processes have been addressed by cross cultural psychiatry as colonialism, sidelining, denigrating, and globalization.

Anthropology

Anthropology, on the other hand, is the scientific study of the origin, the behavior as well as the physical, social, and cultural development of humans. In another word, it is the science of humanity concerned with

human behavior, biology, cultures, societies, and linguistics. It lays stress on nature, nurture, archeology, and genesis of humans in contrast to Allah (God)

Impact of cultural psychiatry on psychiatry practice

The cultural psychiatry perspective can help psychiatrists understand the intangible limitations and possible theories about the origin of mental disorders. Accordingly, it can lead to improvement of management of mental disorders and psychiatry practice in respect to significant diversities of populations suffering from mental disorders worldwide.

Cultural psychiatry takes in consideration the significant effect of environment on the onset, form of symptomatology, and prognosis of mental disorders. It tries to answer the question enquiring about the validity of diagnostic classifications of mental disorders (ICD 11, DSM5, and CCMD) in different cultures and ethnic groups.

Meanwhile, cultural psychiatry aims as well at clarifying the exact etiology of mental disorders once and for all to end the endless debate; whether they are mere representatives of social constructs, genuine medical condition, or a mixture of both.

In conclusion, it is crucial to manage our patients with acute or chronic illnesses whether physical or mental with a panoramic perspective taking the cultural aspects in consideration. Medical professionals have to admit that our knowledge and skills in spite of being important, are not the solo key in defining the prognosis of our patients.

Reference

Kleiman A (1977) Concepts and a model for the comparison of medical systems as cultural systems. Social Science and Medicine, 12, 85-94.