

## CORRESPONDENCE

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## ROLE OF EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS IN PSYCHIATRIC CARE IN PAKISTAN

Dear Sir,

In Pakistan, Emergency Medicine is a relatively new and evolving field.<sup>1</sup> The role of Emergency Department (ED) in the care of psychiatric patients has long been recognized in the effective management of both medical and psychological aspect of the disease.<sup>2</sup> This is particularly so in developing countries like Pakistan, where primary health care services are poorly organized and mental health care facilities and professionals are severely limited. In this context the role of the ED in a low income country like Pakistan assumes far greater importance than in developed countries with well developed mental health care system.<sup>3</sup>

In Emergency Medicine Residency program at Aga Khan University Hospital Karachi, Psychiatry is an important one month rotation. This is primarily due to the fact that many a times it is the Emergency Physician who attends the psychiatry patients in emergency situations. It has also been observed that patients who present to the ED with deliberate self harm (DSH) need urgent psychosocial assessment which can be initiated in the ED by the Emergency Physician, if they are properly trained to identify and manage the problem.<sup>3</sup> Effective management - both medical and psychological has a major impact in preventing the repetition of the act as well as fatal suicides. The ED has a unique potential for tertiary prevention of suicidal behavior: First, individuals who have attempted suicide have a very high risk of further suicidal behavior that is the base-rate of suicide behavior is so high that one can realistically hope to measurably reduce this risk through structured interventions reflecting current knowledge of suicide predictors. Second, individuals who have just attempted suicide are often uniquely receptive to education about suicidal behavior and risk reduction interventions, if these are offered.

Anxiety and Depressive Disorders constitute a substantial proportion of the global burden of disease, and

are projected to form the second most common cause of disability by 2020.<sup>4</sup> This is also true in the context of Pakistan. Low level of education, financial difficulties and relationship problems all contribute to the burden of common psychiatric conditions. It is not uncommon to see young patients with non-cardiac chest pain to have anxiety and depression as a cause of their pain.<sup>5</sup> Similarly other conditions have strong psychological comorbidity. These will only be recognized when Emergency Physicians are trained in recognition and management of common psychological idioms of distress. It is imperative that collaboration between Emergency Medicine and Psychiatry should be developed in other institutions of Pakistan.

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## **JPPS HAS ACHIEVED EXCELLENCE BUT HOW WE CAN MAINTAIN IT?**

Dear Sir,

Having gone through the Journal of Pakistan Psychiatric Society, I am of opinion it has achieved an international standard. This became possible only after untiring efforts of its editor and his team. As an ex-president of PPS, I would like to put my appreciation of this hard work on record and request all the members of PPS to whole heartedly support the journal.

I think the evidence based approach promoted in the journal and relevance of contents for practice in developing countries are distinguishing features of the journal. I hope that the journal will become widely recognized internationally and will help to disseminate the scientific literature from Pakistan. The website of the journal is also very helpful and user friendly.

The achievements of the journal are even more laudable in view of the resource constraints faced by the editorial team. Working in the same city and having a

personal knowledge of the working conditions, I can only imagine the difficulties face by the editor. The regular publication of JPPS has highlighted the need of a scientific journal in mental health from Pakistan. It is high time that the Pakistan Psychiatric Society establishes a permanent editorial office and a funding source for the journal. The journal can't survive only on the advertisement's revenue. I would suggest that specific allocation may be made from the conference registration fees for the journal.

A fixed amount, say for example Rs. 500-1000/- should be added to the registration fees of the PPS conference for JPPS. Assuming an average registration of 300 participants in each conference. This should generate enough resources for the journal. The participants will receive the journal on the occasion of the conference. Besides generating a regular source of revenue for journal, this will also help in keeping the PPS members updated.

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