

HNN222 – WEEKLY NOTES

Sem 1 - Week 1 - Psychopharmacology basics

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

- **Define mental health and mental illness and explain differences between the two**

Mental health: a person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being

- Mental health is defined by the World Health Organization as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community.

Mental illness: a condition which causes serious disorder in a person's behaviour or thinking

- Mental illnesses are associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities

Difference between the two:

Mental illness is different to mental health. Mental illness includes a range of conditions for which there are standard criteria used to diagnose them, such as depression, anxiety and substance use disorders.

A mental illness significantly affects how a person feels, thinks, behaves and interacts with other people.

The latest national survey found nearly half of all Australians will have a mental illness in their lifetime, and one in five had a mental illness in the previous 12 months.

- **Describe causes of mental illness (psychopathology)**
- childhood abuse, trauma, or neglect
- social isolation or loneliness
- experiencing discrimination and stigma
- social disadvantage, poverty or debt
- bereavement (losing someone close to you)
- severe or long-term stress
- having a long-term physical health condition
- unemployment or losing your job
- homelessness or poor housing
- being a long-term carer for someone
- drug and alcohol misuse
- domestic violence, bullying or other abuse as an adult
- significant trauma as an adult, such as military combat, being involved in a serious incident in which you feared for your life, or being the victim of a violent crime
- physical causes – for example, a head injury or a neurological condition such as epilepsy can have an impact on your behavior and mood. (It's important to rule out potential physical causes before seeking further treatment for a mental health problem).

Although lifestyle factors including work, diet, drugs and lack of sleep can all affect your mental health

Categorical causes: biological, psychological, environmental

What Biological Factors Contribute to Mental Illness?

Some mental illnesses have been linked to abnormal functioning of nerve cell circuits or pathways that connect particular brain regions. Nerve cells within these brain circuits communicate through chemicals called neurotransmitters. "Tweaking" these chemicals - through medicines, psychotherapy or other medical procedures -- can help brain circuits run more efficiently. In addition, defects in or injury to certain areas of the brain have also been linked to some mental conditions.

Other biological factors that may be involved in the development of mental illness include:

- **Genetics (heredity):** Mental illnesses sometimes run in families, suggesting that people who have a family member with a mental illness may be somewhat more likely to develop one themselves. Susceptibility is passed on in families through genes. Experts believe many mental illnesses are linked to abnormalities in many genes rather than just one or a few and that how these genes interact with the environment is unique for every person (even identical twins). That is why a person inherits a susceptibility to a mental illness and doesn't necessarily develop the illness. Mental illness itself occurs from the interaction of multiple genes and other factors -- such as stress, abuse, or a traumatic event -- which can influence, or trigger, an illness in a person who has an inherited susceptibility to it.
- **Infections:** Certain infections have been linked to brain damage and the development of mental illness or the worsening of its symptoms. For example, a condition known as pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorder (PANDA) associated with the Streptococcus bacteria has been linked to the development of obsessive-compulsive disorder and other mental illnesses in children.
- **Brain defects or injury:** Defects in or injury to certain areas of the brain have also been linked to some mental illnesses.
- **Prenatal damage:** Some evidence suggests that a disruption of early fetal brain development or trauma that occurs at the time of birth -- for example, loss of oxygen to the brain -- may be a factor in the development of certain conditions, such as autism spectrum disorder.
- **Substance abuse :** Long-term substance abuse, in particular, has been linked to anxiety, depression, and paranoia.
- **Other factors:** Poor nutrition and exposure to toxins, such as lead, may play a role in the development of mental illnesses.

What Psychological Factors Contribute to Mental Illness?

Psychological factors that may contribute to mental illness include:

- Severe psychological trauma suffered as a child, such as emotional, physical, or sexual abuse

- An important early loss, such as the loss of a parent
- Neglect
- Poor ability to relate to others

What Environmental Factors Contribute to Mental Illness?

Certain stressors can trigger an illness in a person who is susceptible to mental illness.

These stressors include:

- Death or divorce
- A dysfunctional family life
- Feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, anxiety, anger, or loneliness
- Changing jobs or schools
- Social or cultural expectations (For example, a society that associates beauty with thinness can be a factor in the development of eating disorders.)
- Substance abuse by the person or the person's parents

- **Distinguish between clinical and personal recovery and describe enablers and barriers for personal recovery**

<https://mentisassist.org.au/what-we-do/what-is-recovery>

Personal recovery: Personal recovery refers to the idea that originated from the expertise of people in analyzing the lived experience of mental illness. According to O'Hagan's experience, personal recovery is sensitive and deeply personal that slowly affects one's attitudes, behavior, psychology, values, feelings, goals, skills etc. personal recovery helps in living a satisfying, favorable and pleasant life within the consequences and affects of mental illness (O'Hagan, 2014).

Clinical recovery:

'**Clinical recovery** is an idea that has emerged from the expertise of **mental health** professionals, and involves getting rid of symptoms, restoring social functioning, in other words 'getting back to normal'

Enablers

1. Increase awareness of depression and anxiety 2. Reduce stigma and discrimination 3. Improve help seeking 4. Reduce impact and disability 5. Facilitate learning, collaboration, innovation and research

Hope underpins the recovery process of mental illness, as recovery depends on the notion that a patient desires to get better.

Barriers

Stigma in language a barrier to recovery

Shame and stigma

Poor access to support services

Unsupportive family members

Substance abuse

Language barriers

- Discuss the structure of the mental health services within Victoria

Specialist mental health services in Victoria are divided into two service delivery types: clinical and non-clinical. Clinical services focus on assessment and treatment of people with a mental illness. ... Non-clinical services are called Mental Health Community Support Services (MHCSS).

- Discuss the implications of having mental illness for the individual, family and community
- Individual:**
- Individuals with psychological disorders are at greater risk for decreased quality of life, educational difficulties, lowered productivity and poverty, social problems, vulnerability to abuse, and additional health problems.
 - Education is often compromised when early-onset mental disorders prevent individuals from completing their education or successfully pursuing a career. Kessler et al. (1995) found that individuals with a psychological disorder were significantly less likely to complete high school, enter college, or receive a college degree, compared to their peers without mental illness.(5)
 - In addition, psychological disorders result in lowered individual productivity due to unemployment, missed work, and reduced productivity at work.
 - Mental illness and poverty “interact in a negative cycle”, in which poverty acts as a risk factor for mental illness, and mental illness increases the risk that individuals will “drift into or remain in poverty” Lund et al. (2011).(7)
 - This negative cycle may also contribute to high rates of homelessness among individuals with mental illness; the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration estimates that 20 to 25 % of the U.S. homeless population suffers from severe mental illness, while only 6% of the general U.S. population is severely mentally ill.(8)
- Family:**
- The burden of caring for a mentally ill individual often falls on the patient’s immediate family or relatives. Families and caregivers of individuals with psychological disorders are often unable to work at full capacity due to the demands of caring for a mentally ill individual, leading to decreased economic output and a reduction in household income.
 - Loss of income and the financial costs of caring for a mentally ill person put these households at an increased risk of poverty.
 - Family members may also experience significant and chronic stress due to the emotional and physical challenges of caring for a mentally ill family member.(11)
- Community:**
- In addition, psychological disorders can exacerbate other public health issues, increasing the burden on national economies and impeding international public health efforts.
 - Although the majority of individuals with mental illness do not exhibit dangerous behaviors, violence and incarceration among mentally ill individuals can place a significant financial and social burden on communities and nations.

