Editorial

Cyberchondria in COVID19 Pandemic

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As we are all aware of the impact of corona virus on not just the physical health, but mental as well, did we know in the latest news of published by Lancet Psychiatry journal about one in five Covid19 patients develop psychiatric illness in the first 90 days of turning positive? [1]. On comparing the previous large-scale epidemics, one issue of immediate relevance for mental health that is novel for the COVID-19 pandemic is a potentially increased problematic Internet use. The internet is too widespread and the lockdown has paved way for the access to the internet as an essential part of life. The COVID -19 pandemic is characterized by uncertainty. In this uncertain and unpredictable environment, the natural way to gain some control is to collect more information about the novel virus. This excessive consumption of time on the internet about the virus has boiled down to Cyberchondria. Cyberchondria describes an individual's anxiety about their well-being that is caused or worsened due to a relentless search of the internet for medical information. It was coined by a British newspaper in the early 2000s as a wordplay on hypochondria [2,3].

Cyberchondria manifests with continuous health information seeking, assiduous checking health-related and/or seeking reassurance, health anxiety or distress, persevering with problematic behaviors despite their negative consequences (compulsivity) and impaired functioning. The disrupted communication and relationships with health care providers and negative effects on the seeking and receiving of health care, such as avoidance of doctors and poor treatment adherence been associated with an increased health care utilization, measured by the number of visits to health professionals. In view of these, cyberchondria qualifies as a public health problem. It would be unrealistic and counterproductive to suggest abstinence from this activity, people will continue to search for health information online, especially during large-scale epidemics and when public health is jeopardized in any other way.

A few was of stopping Cyberchondria are by limiting the health searching by narrowing it down by using only one reputable medical information source, reducing the frequency of searching, to recognize and delay the impulse to search for new information of the virus, distracting oneself by playing, cooking or even walking around after deciding to put the phone down and by getting comfortable with the uncomfortable. Management with Internet-Delivered Cognitive Behavioural Therapy results in a "significantly greater reduction" in cyberchondria compared with receiving psycho-education pamphlets, periodic monitoring, and optional support from a clinician [4].

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