

The Connection Between Psychological and Physical Health

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The Connection

Psychological studies show that your mind and your body are strongly linked. As your mental health declines, your physical health can wear down, and if your physical health declines, it can make you feel mentally "down."

(American Psychological Association, 2005).

What we will look at today

- Definitions of health.
- How physical interventions can impact on our psychological health.
- How psychiatric interventions can impact on our physical health.

Overview continued

- What is the link between psychological and physical health.
- How can clinical psychologists help with our psychological and physical health.

How is health defined?

As a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease and infirmity. WHO, 1948.

Indigenous Health Views

- Australian Aboriginal people generally define health as “...Health does not just mean the physical well-being of the individual but refers to the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural well-being of the whole community. This is a whole of life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life (NHMRC, 1996).

How is health defined?

- Bircher (2005) defines health as “a dynamic state of well-being characterized by a physical and mental potential, which satisfies the demands of life commensurate with age, culture, and personal responsibility”.

Health is Multifactorial

- Health is not simply free from disease, it is much more!
- Health incorporates the mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, sexual, psychological, social, aspects of our being.

Physical Interventions

- What are physical interventions?
 - When we are looking at physical interventions, often these are of the medical nature.
 - An intervention in a medical context would be referred to the act of intervening, interfering or interceding with the intent of modifying the outcome.
 - In medicine, an intervention is usually undertaken to help treat or cure a condition (Morbsy, 2010).

Interventions

- There are two common medical/physical interventions that are used in today's society to improve our physical health.
 - Medications and Surgery
- Physical Interventions can be undertaken by a medical doctor, this could be a GP, a specialist surgeon or a generalist surgeon.
- The other type of doctors that would prescribe medications is one who has specialised in a particular area, eg a Urologist.

Medications

- Medications can and often do have side effects which can directly and indirectly impact on our psychological health.
- Direct psychological effects can include
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Irritability
 - Decreased concentration, attention, and memory

Direct psychological effects from medications

- Hallucinations
- Delusional thinking
- Mania
- Hypomania
- Obsessional preoccupations
- Sleep disturbances (insomnias, nightmares, unrestful sleep).
- Psychosis
- Paranoid

Indirect psychological effects

- Indirect side effects from medications that can impact on our psychological health (not exhaustive)
 - Acne
 - Wt gain/ obesity
 - Blurred vision
 - glaucoma
 - Fatigue
 - Hair loss (alopecia)
 - Increased hair growth (hirsutism)

Indirect effects from medications

- Gynecomastia
- Pain
- Diabetes
- Delay in wound healing
- Daily nausea
- Osteoporosis
- Increased risk for infections
- Infertility

Surgery

- Surgery is used to help treat a large variety of physical conditions including cancer, in the hope of curing, preventing or delaying a decline in our health or untimely death (Morsby, 2010).
- However, side effects after the surgery can impact on our overall quality of life and our psychological health.

Effects from surgery

- Amputation of a limb
- Complete removal or part removal of an organ (eg bowel, stomach, breast, testis or eye).
- Stoma
- Chronic pain
- Loss of function of a limb/s
- Loss of bladder control

Psychological effects

As it can be seen there are many effects both direct and indirect from medication and surgery which have the potential to impact on our psychological health.

Medication Side Effects

- There are thousands of medications prescribed or bought over the counter today which have the potential to effect our health in a negative way.
- Rather than go through the different drug groups for this part of the talk I am going to focus on prednisolone.
- I will use this drug as an example to explain the linkage between how physical interventions can impact on our psychological health.

Linking physical to psychological

- The direct effects of a medication such as prednisolone can cause us to feel depressed, anxious or alter our memory (Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, 2010).
- The indirect effects from this same drug can cause obesity, diabetes and acne, these side effects can also result in us feeling depressed and/or anxious (Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, 2010).

Linking physical to psychological

- Looking at both the direct and indirect effects from this drug it is not a stretch to understand why people across the life span, who take this drug for conditions such as arthritis, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, systemic lupus, severe asthma and severe psoriasis, there are many other conditions not listed here which could potentially develop psychological concerns either directly (depression) or indirectly (diabetes).

Explaining the Link

The linkage between surgical procedures and psychological effects can be explained with an example of inflammatory bowel disease.

Explaining the Link

- Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) covers a group of disorders in which the intestines become inflamed (red and swollen), probably as a result of an immune reaction of the body against its own intestinal tissue (Morsby, 2010).
- Two are major types of IBD, ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease.

Explaining the Link

- Both ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease usually run a waxing and waning course in the intensity and severity of condition.
- When there is severe inflammation, the disease is considered to be in an active stage, and the person experiences a flare-up of their condition.
- When the degree of inflammation is less (or absent), the person usually is without symptoms, and the condition is considered to be in remission (Morsby, 2010).

Explaining the Link

- Failure to suspend and/or control the symptoms of inflammatory bowel disease with medications such as prednisolone often results in surgery to reduce the symptoms and can result in the formation of a stoma.

Psychological Effects From Surgery

- A stoma is an opening on the outside of the body for the waste to pass through.
- Studies have shown people who have had to undergo surgery for the formation of a stoma with inflammatory bowel disease are at risk of having on going problems with depression and anxiety (Mikocka-Walus et al, 2006).

Psychological Effects Continued

- Many psychological effects can result from having a formed stoma (other surgery also).
- People may alienate themselves from social activity
 - They may go through stages of grief
 - They may feel emotionally down
 - They may have altered feelings about their body image

Psychological Effects Continued

- Restrictions within their current lifestyle and previous activities (including sports).
- Change in perception of their own attractiveness
- There may be feelings of degradation, isolation and mutilation (Woodward, 2002).

Concluding Physical to Psychological

- As we can see from the examples of physical interventions, of prednisolone (medications) and surgery (formation of a stoma) can either directly or indirectly effect our psychological health.
- From the examples provided, (medication and surgery) it becomes apparent why we can go on to develop conditions like depression, and anxiety.

Some symptoms of depression

- Stop going out
- Significant weight gain or loss
- Tired all the time
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- Withdraw from close friends and family

Depression

- Sleep problems
- Irritability
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Diminished ability to concentrate
- Prevalence low mood
- May have suicidal thoughts

Symptoms of Anxiety

- This list is not exhaustive and anxiety looks different for each person.
 - Sweating
 - Flushing
 - Increased heart rate
 - Muscle tension
 - Churning stomach
 - Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep

Anxiety

- Easily tired
- Irritability
- Nightmares
- Constant worrying thoughts

Psychiatric Interventions that impact on physical health

- A Psychiatric intervention is when a person is given either a drug for a particular mental health condition or series of ECT treatments.
- Psychiatric interventions are undertaken by a psychiatrist (Breggin, 2008).

Psychiatric Interventions

- These psychiatric interventions are prescribed to treat symptoms of psychiatric conditions.
- There are a variety of conditions in which some one may be prescribed a psychiatric drug.

Mental Health Conditions

- Here is a list of some conditions that some one may be prescribed a psychiatric drug.
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
 - PTSD
 - Bipolar Affective Disorder
 - Schizophrenia
 - Personality Disorders
 - Sleep disorders
 - Substance Dependence

Duration of treatment

- Some people may be asked to take a drug for a few months while others are expected to remain on psychiatric medications for the rest of lives.
- There are many psychiatric drugs around today.
- Anti-depressants:-
 - Effexor
 - Zoloft
 - Luvox
 - Prozac
 - Amitriptyline

Psychiatric Drugs

- Anxiolytics (Drugs for anxiety)
 - Diazepam
 - Alprazolam
 - Clonazepam
 - Propanolol

Psychiatric Drugs

- Mood Stabilizer
 - Lithium
 - Tegretol
 - Gabapentin
 - Epilim
- Stimulants
 - Ritalin

Psychiatric Drugs Continued

- Anti-psychotics
 - Clozaril
 - Risperidone
 - Seroquel
 - Zyprexa
 - Haloperidol

Linking Psychiatric to the physical

- Psychiatric medication is prescribed for a variety of psychiatric conditions and there are physical sides from these drugs.
- For the purpose of today's talk we will use the drug Risperidone as an example of how this medication can and usually does impact on physical health.

Psychiatric medications impact on physical health

- Risperidone is a medication that is given for psychotic symptoms.
- It is however, sometimes given as a mood stabilizer, for behavioural disturbances in the elderly, and treatment in autism.

Linking Psychiatric interventions to physical health side effects

- Side Effects from Risperidone
 - Insomnia
 - Weight gain
 - Incontinence
 - Polydipsia (water intoxication)
 - Rhinitis
 - Chronic brain impairment
 - Tardive dyskinesia

ECT and physical side effects

- ECT is prescribed often in series of treatments most commonly for individuals with more severe forms of depression.
- This treatment which involves being under a general anaesthesia, and electrodes placed onto the temporal lobes with an electric current passing through the body.

Linking Psychiatric Interventions to Physical Side Effects

- Evidence has shown that ECT treatments cause damage to the brain resulting in memory damage, or chronic brain impairment (CBI).
- Other symptoms of CBI include:-
 - Short term memory impairment
 - Impaired new learning
 - Difficulty concentration
 - Inattention

ECT and Chronic Brain Impairment

- Loss of energy and vitality
- Loss in the ability to have empathy
- Increased impatience
- Increased irritability
- Increased anger
- The deterioration is gradual over months or years so that the person appears to be declining from stress or the mental health condition (Breggin, 2008).

The Link Between Psychological and Physical Health

- Health incorporates the mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, biological, sexual, psychological, social, aspects of our being.
- When one of these aspects is out of balance than we can feel the effects from this. It is from this change in balance that we need to learn to shift to real life changes and to re-balance the harmony with our health.

Psychological and Physical Connection

- Whether it is the side effects from a medication for a physical or psychiatric condition these can impact on our psychological health either directly or indirectly.
- So may a surgical or ECT procedure create psychological distress and pain.

Psychological and Physical Connection

- In today's society there is an attempt to separate the psychological from the physical.
- So, what can we do if we are unhappy with our psychological health as a result of physical or psychiatric interventions?
- If we are feeling sad, angry, altered, anxious, dissatisfied, stressed, or mutilated?

What studies have found

- 80 percent of Americans say that during the past few years they have become more aware of how their mental health and emotions can affect their physical health (APA 2005).
- Research supports the idea that having a positive outlook can extend one's life ("Emotional Longevity: What Really Determines How Long You Live," Norman B. Anderson and Elizabeth P. Anderson, 2003).

Studies supporting the link

- Two-thirds of all office visits to G.P.'s, are due to stress-related symptoms (American Academy of Family Physicians).
- Consumers report that talk therapy was reportedly more effective than drug therapy for depression and anxiety (Consumer Reports, October 2004).

What Clinical Psychologist May Do to Help?

- To see a clinical psychologist, we can either get a referral from our GP, specialist, or our community health agency.
- The clinical psychologist will first start with a thorough interview with yourself and if suitable with loved ones (some one that you trust).

What Clinical Psychologist May do to Help?

- A interview is done to begin to get to know you and to get a picture of what has been happening for you.
- Following on from this information the clinical psychologist may do some formal assessments to ascertain what you were like before the treatment you were receiving.

What Clinical Psychologists May do to Help?

- Depending on the outcome from the interviews, assessments and referral information the clinical psychologist will then work with you to help begin to gain a better balance in your overall health.
- The treatment plan that is devised will be individualised to your specific goals and realistic to every day life outcomes, taking into consideration your age, culture, physical, psychological and environmental factors.

Where might the Clinical Psychologist Assist?

- Low mood
- Anxious feelings and thoughts
- Distress with body image
- Management of stress
- Re-focus on lifestyle practices
- Sleep problems
- Alcohol and smoking problems
- Assistance with adjustment
- Grief counselling

The Connection

- Just as light brightens darkness, discovering inner fulfillment can eliminate any disorder or discomfort. This is truly the key to creating balance and harmony in everything you do. Deepak Chopra

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Online and local organisations that can help.

www.cqu.edu.au/about-us/service-and-facilities/wellness-centre/resources

www.psychology.org.au/findapsychologist/

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