

Consultation Liaison Psychiatry: Study from A Tertiary Care Hospital, Adilabad

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Abstract

Introduction: The Proportion of mental health disorders is increasing globally. Psychiatric complaints are common especially in patients admitted in the hospital setting for various reasons. The present study has been done to determine the pattern of referrals to the Psychiatry department among patients admitted to the hospital. **Methods:** It was a hospital-based cross-sectional study done at a tertiary care hospital for a duration of six months. The total sample size was n=470 which were referrals for a consultation to the Psychiatry department from various clinical departments of the hospital. A pre-designed proforma was used to get the relevant information. **Results:** Demographic characteristics in the present study revealed that there was a male preponderance with the mean age being 42.6 years. The majority of them belonged to the Tribal area, were illiterate, and belonged to low socioeconomic status. The maximum number of Psychiatric referrals (77.4%) came from the General Medicine department; followed by Surgical branches such as General Surgery (7.4%), Obstetrics & Gynecology (5.9%), and Orthopedics (5.4%). Alcohol withdrawal syndrome and its related disorder was the most common psychiatric condition found among the referrals (80.8%). **Conclusions:** A detailed history and complete evaluation of the patients who had psychiatry referrals should be done. There is growing consensus that Consultation Liaison Psychiatry is extremely important and the need of the hour with a growing number of mental health disorders globally.

Keywords: Psychiatry, Referrals, Consultation Liaison Psychiatry (CLP)

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Introduction

Mental Health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stress of life, can work productively, and can contribute to his or her community. Mental and behavioral disorders are found in people of all regions, all countries, and all societies. They are characterized by a

combination of abnormal thoughts, perceptions, emotions, behavior with a significant impact on health and major social-economic consequences. [1, 2] National Mental Health Survey (2015-16) from India showed that nearly 150 million Indians aged 13 and above suffer from one or more mental health problems. The

proportion of mental health disorders among young adolescents is 7.3%. [3] And a growing concern has been the risk of suicide in India and data indicate that 0.9% are at a high risk of suicide.[4] Recognizing the importance of Mental Health, World Health Organization (WHO) in 2017 organized the theme as 'Depression: Let's talk'. Patients visit the hospital either for Outpatient (OP) services and for Inpatient (IP) services such as surgery, medical management. Existing literature and data show the psychiatric complaints are common especially in patients admitted in the hospital setting for various reasons. [5, 6] The evolution of Psychiatry shows that the Department is getting more and more attention with the establishment of Psychiatric units and henceforth psychiatric referrals are also on the rise. But still compared to other countries, despite high rates of psychiatric conditions in Indian patients from other Departments, Psychiatric referral rates remain low. The rate of referral to Psychiatry from various other departments in a hospital setting ranged from 0.06% to 3.6%. [4-8] Consultation Liaison Psychiatry (CLP) deals with the study of the relationship between medical and psychiatric disorders. The three important components of a Referral system include the Doctor who has been referred, the patient who is referred, and the Psychiatrist to whom the patient has been referred. The process of referring should be brief and clear regarding what and why the patient has been referred and all other relevant data. [9, 10] With the above background, the present study has been done to determine the pattern of referrals to the Psychiatry department among patients admitted to the Hospital.

Material and Methods

The present study was a hospital-based observational study done in the Department of Psychiatry, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Adilabad, Telangana. The duration of the study was 6

months from March 2019 to August 2019. The total sample size was 470 which were referrals for a consultation to the Psychiatry department from various clinical departments of the hospital. A pre-designed proforma was used to get the basic demographic data and clinical data such as duration of stay, type of illness, comorbid conditions were taken. Data entry was done using Microsoft Excel 2016 version and analysis using EPI INFO version 7.2. Categorical data were presented in percentages and proportion and numerical data using mean and standard deviation.

Results

The total study population was n=470, out of whom n=398 (84.7%) were males and n=72 (15.3%) females. Male preponderance was seen with the male to female ratio being 5.52:1. Age distribution showed that the majority of them belonged to the 40-50 years age group with the youngest person being 12 years and the eldest being 70 years of age. More than two-thirds of the study population were from Tribal areas followed by rural backgrounds. The majority (34%) of them were illiterate and belonged to lower socioeconomic status (42.1%). With regards to occupation, 58.5% of them were Agricultural background followed by daily laborers. One-third of the females were homemakers. The mean duration of the stay in the hospital was 6.5 days with the majority having a hospital stay for about 1-7 days. Comorbid medical conditions associated with the study population were Diabetes mellitus, Hypertension, Coronary heart disease, liver and kidney disease. In terms of Organ involvement, 12.3% (n=58) had multiorgan involvement. With regards to reasons for psychiatry, referrals were irrelevant talk, fearfulness, irritability, suicidal thoughts, disturbed sleep, restlessness, and a few others. The majority of the referrals were from Medical and allied branches (81%, n=381) followed by surgery and allied branches (19%, n=89).

Table 1: Referral Department

Department	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)
General Medicine	336 (84.4%)	28 (38.9%)	364 (77.4%)
General Surgery	36 (9%)	--	36 (7.7%)
Orthopedics	25 (6.3%)	--	25 (5.4%)
Pediatrics	01 (0.3%)	16 (22.2%)	17 (3.6%)
Obstetrics & Gynecology	--	28 (38.9%)	28 (5.9%)
Total	398 (100%)	72 (100%)	470 (100%)

With regards to Referral Departments, the maximum number of Psychiatric referrals came from the General Medicine department; with more than three fourth (77.4%) coming from them. After General Medicine Department, most referrals were from Surgical branches such as General Surgery (7.4%), Obstetrics & Gynecology (5.9%), and Orthopedics (5.4%). N=17 patients were referred from the Pediatric department. Gender distribution in terms of referral departments also followed a similar pattern except that all n=28 cases of Post-partum psychosis were from Obstetrics & Gynecology department. Among males, more than three fourth (84.4%) referrals

from the General Medicine department followed by General surgery (9%), Orthopedics (6.3%), and n=1 referral from Pediatrics. Among females, slightly more than one-third (38.9%) referrals were from General Medicine and Obstetrics & Gynecology departments each respectively. Out of n=17 Pediatric referrals, n=16 cases were female patients. In the present study, none of the referrals from Surgical branches were female referrals. All referrals from Obstetrics & Gynecology department (n=28, 5.9%) were from Post-natal wards with conditions of Postpartum blues, psychosis, and adjustment disorder.

Table 2: Psychiatric & Medical Disorders in the study population

Disorder	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)
Alcohol withdrawal syndrome	378 (94.9%)	02 (2.8%)	380 (80.8%)
Self-Injury	09 (2.3%)	15 (20.8%)	24 (5.2%)
Conversion disorder	02 (0.5%)	17 (23.6%)	19 (4%)
Known case of Psychiatric illness	03 (0.8%)	08 (11.1%)	11 (2.4%)
Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)	06 (1.5%)	02 (2.8%)	08 (1.7%)
Post-partum psychosis & related	--	28 (38.9%)	28 (5.9%)
Total	398 (100%)	72 (100%)	470 (100%)

Alcohol withdrawal syndrome and its related disorder was the most common psychiatric condition found among the referrals. 80.8% (n=380) referrals were related to this condition among which 378 were males. These patients had restlessness, sweating, irritability, tremor, and

disorientation. An alcohol-addicted person when admitted to the hospital for either medical management or surgery usually goes into Alcohol withdrawal syndrome. The majority (n=15) of the cases of conversion disorder were from the Pediatric age group with the youngest child being at

12 years and the eldest at 23 years. Hence conversion disorder in the present study was typically seen in adolescents and youth populations. n=24 patients (4%) had self-injury; of whom the majority (n=15) were females. n=11 patients were known cases of Psychiatric illness in past. 8 patients had chronic kidney disease. With regards to the management of the patients, more than two-thirds (67.4%, n=317) were managed by pharmacotherapy alone or in combination with non-pharmacotherapy measures such as counseling, exercises, and others. The rest of the study population (32.6%, n=153) was managed by non-pharmacotherapy measures.

Discussion

In recent times, there is increased focus on the mental health of physically ill patients. The existing literature shows that majority of the physically ill patients have some form of Mental illness. And there is a growing burden of mental health disorders globally and in India. The existing health system in India with three levels of Health care including Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary level care with the majority of the burden of tertiary level. Tertiary level care is mainly provided by Teaching Hospitals and specialist hospitals. In a typical Medical college hospital, every teaching hospital has a Psychiatry Department along with an attached Psychology wing. Apart from providing Outpatient and Inpatient services concerned to the department, the Psychiatry department also does a lot of outreach sessions for providing mental health care. Patients admitted to the hospital as Inpatients often do have simultaneous medical and psychiatric problems and the consequence of which include increased morbidity increased duration of stay and health care expenses. The rate of psychiatric comorbidity among admitted patients varies from 40-50% depending upon the type of health care units like primary health care unit or tertiary care unit. Psychiatry Referrals from various departments such as General Medicine,

General Surgery, Obstetrics & Gynecology are also properly evaluated and managed by Psychiatry Department. In this context, consultation-liaison psychiatry is an extremely important, young, vibrant subspecialty of Psychiatry. The present hospital-based observational study was done at a Tertiary care hospital to determine the pattern of referrals to the Psychiatry department among patients admitted in the hospital; where n=470 referrals that came to the Psychiatry department in the duration of 6 months were properly evaluated.

Demographic characteristics in the present study revealed that there was a male preponderance with the mean age being 42.6 years. The majority of them belonged to the Tribal area, were illiterate, and belonged to low socioeconomic status. These findings were in concurrence with findings from Grover et al., 's [11] study where three-fifths (60.3%) were males, and the mean age of patients was 45.2 years. However, in a study by Keertish N et al., [12], slightly younger age (mean=38.39 years) and gender variation with females being 42% was seen compared to 15.3% females in the present study. With regards to Referral Departments found that more than three fourth of Psychiatric referrals came from the General Medicine department followed by surgical branches such as General Surgery (7.4%), Obstetrics & Gynecology (5.9%), and Orthopedics (5.4%). N=17 patients were referred from the Pediatric department. Similar findings were observed in the study by Pingali S et al., [13] where nearly two-thirds of the referrals were done from the department of medicine and its allied branches followed by surgery and allied branches in the rest one-third of the referrals. In contrast to the present study, findings from Chapagai M et al., [14] showed that only 28% of cases were referred from the Department of Internal Medicine. Only n=1 case was referred from Obstetrics & Gynecology department compared to n=28 cases in the present study. This difference could be attributed to a different geographical area as

the study by Chapagai M et al (2013) [14] was done in a Tertiary hospital in Nepal and might be due attributed to local health-related factors. Psychiatric & Medical Disorders in the study population found that Alcohol withdrawal syndrome and its related disorder was the most common psychiatric condition found among the referrals which were seen in more than three fourth population (80.8%) followed by self-injury and conversion disorder. Post-partum related issues were noted in 28 patients. These findings were in concurrence with Pavan Kumar K et al., [15] where the most common diagnosis made in the referrals was Alcohol withdrawal syndrome, followed by suicide attempts (17.5%), medically unexplained symptoms, and Anxiety disorders (13.1%). Abnormal behavior in the post-partum period was seen in 3.5% of their study population compared to the present study (5.9%).

The study by Gurram S et al., [15] observed that substance use disorders were seen in one third (33%) of their study population followed by intentional self-harm (17%), organic mental disorders (15%), neurotic disorders (14%), mood disorders (7%) and other conditions such as psychotic disorders, behavioral disorders, and disorders of adult and personality. In contrast, Chapagai M et al., [14] study found neurotic, stress-related, and somatoform disorders in 30.5% followed by organic mental disorders (27.4%) and disorders due to psychoactive substance use (16.8%). In Tekkalaki B et al., [17] study, comorbid psychiatric problems were seen in almost one-third (32.6%) compared to only 2.4% in the present study. Other reasons were intentional self-harm (30.3%), past psychiatric history (9.1%), substance-related problems (8.1%), and medically unexplained symptoms (19.3%). The most common psychiatric diagnosis among them was organic mental disorder which was seen in 20% followed by Neurotic stress-related and somatoform disorder (15.56%) and affective disorder (14.07%). In similar

kind of study by Pingali S et al., [13] at a tertiary care teaching hospital in Telangana found that the most common reason for psychiatry referral was attempted suicide due to poisoning seen in one third (32.9%) followed by alcohol-related disorders (30%), sleep disorders & head injury in 7.9% each respectively, altered behavior (5%) and psychiatric illness (3.6%). Keertish N et al., [12] study on reasons for psychiatric referrals revealed that neurotic, stress-related, and somatoform disorders in 41.7%, mood disorders (12.9%), substance use disorders (12.7%), psychotic disorders (6.2%), organic mental disorders (5.4%), behavioral syndromes associated with psychological disturbances and physical factors (3.3%). With regards to the management of the cases that had psychiatric referrals, more than two-thirds were managed by pharmacotherapy alone or in combination with non-pharmacotherapy measures. The rest of the study population was managed by non-pharmacotherapy measures such as counseling, exercises, and others. These findings were like findings by Tekkalaki B et al., [17] where about 71% were managed by pharmacotherapy alone or in combination with non-pharmacotherapy and the remaining were managed by non-pharmacotherapy. Limitations of the present study include the following: Since the study had included only in patients who were admitted to the hospital, findings may be difficult to generalize entirely. And the diagnosis was based on clinical interviews and assessment, no standardized diagnostic tools were used. But still, since the study has been done at a tertiary care hospital from a tribal area, the findings of the present study through limelight and pave way for more research into this one of the most important aspects of psychiatry i.e., consultation-liaison psychiatry.

Conclusions

The pattern and Alcohol usage globally is on the increasing trend which is evident from the various surveys conducted across the globe. Its reflection is quite evident in the present study wherein Alcohol withdrawal syndrome and its related disorder was the commonest condition diagnosed in psychiatry referrals in the tertiary care hospital. A detailed history and complete evaluation of the patients who had psychiatry referrals should be done. There is growing consensus that Consultation Liaison Psychiatry is extremely important and the need of the hour with the growing number of mental health disorders globally.

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