



His master voice

Abstract

In this free-flowing conversation with the Open Journal of Psychiatry & Allied Sciences (OJPAS®), the stalwart Dr. HR Phookun speaks about how the ongoing pandemic is changing the world we live in and the major challenges for mental health professionals arising out of this crisis. He also discusses his experience of taking online classes and predicts a larger role that technology will play in the delivery of mental health services.

Keywords: Pandemic. Technology. Social Media. Suicide.

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The venerated Dr. HR Phookun spoke to the Open Journal of Psychiatry & Allied Sciences (OJPAS®) on a range of issues on a historic day when the stalwart launched the social media and poster campaign against stigma attached to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) at the behest of the Indian Psychiatric Society, Assam State Branch (IPS-ASB) on the 16th of June, 2020.

THOUGHTS ON LAUNCHING THE SOCIAL MEDIA AND POSTER CAMPAIGN DIGITALLY

It is the beginning of a technological transformation and I was glad to officially launch it. The efforts of Dr. Anweshak Das and Dr. Jayanta Dutta need to be appreciated.

ON PSYCHIATRISTS EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY

It is important that we as psychiatrists are properly oriented and adjust to the requirements of the changing times. People in our generation are going to take longer to adapt but your (younger) generation should be comfortable with this change.

ON THE CHANGING WORLD AMIDST THE PANDEMIC

We are witnessing a marked change in behavioural patterns in all walks of life, be it communication, commerce, and healthcare. We have to be prepared for more digitisation.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

We need to train our acumen to be accessible to larger number of stakeholders. The early detection of depression and the risk

of suicide is a challenge as we know awareness is the bedrock for suicide prevention.

MAJOR PSYCHIATRIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE PANDEMIC

Anxiety surrounding infection and the economic outcome. Depression from isolation complicated by comorbidities. I have a cousin in his mid-70 who needed psychiatric intervention. It has been a tough and widespread global phenomenon.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PSYCHIATRY

Exceeding numbers of people express hopelessness, helplessness on social media and a large number seek help. I have personally responded to Facebook users who look for a ray of hope and have spoken about mindfulness.

ON THE RENEWED INTEREST IN YOGA AND MEDITATION

As psychiatrists we need to be advocating psychopharmacology. Yoga and meditation are useful as adjuvants, but cannot be recommended as first line. We need to put emphasis on psychoeducation and the role of combination of pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy.

THE UNTIMELY DEMISE OF SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT HAS PUT THE LIMELIGHT BACK ON THE RELATION BETWEEN CREATIVITY AND SUICIDALITY

There are certain personality traits that are common among creative people, the most notable being narcissism. There

could be a putative relation between narcissism and suicidality. Also, anxious/dependent and depressive personality traits put the individual at risk for suicide.

TOP PRIORITIES AT THIS HOUR OF CRISIS

Our top priority should be to spread awareness regarding the recovery and early signs of depression.

EXPERIENCE WITH ONLINE LECTURES

I was very happy at the warm reception that the video I made for the students of a commerce college received. I made the video on the insistence of my wife who herself is a faculty member in a college. So, I felt it was necessary to communicate with the youth and tell them how they can exercise emotional control to ensure a bright future for themselves. I have

appeared on television (TV) twice and both experiences have been pleasant. But, I am not sure about how comfortable I am in front of a camera. Only time will tell if I engage in another social media interaction (smiles).

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR IPS-ASB

“More and more such initiatives need to be taken up. We should focus on more elaborate content and ensure far wider circulation”, the stalwart signs off in his magnetic baritone voice that has captivated successive generations of psychiatrists, leaving the interviewer in awe.

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