



The mind outside the mind

Shawn Zeelie

President, SAAHIP

The mind is a powerful thing. During the month of October, we focussed on mental health awareness. What determines if a person is mentally ill and what determines if the person is not? The definition of mental illness varies from person to person, however, if a person's thinking process is off balance, you are more than likely going to find a mental illness. It is natural to occasionally experience suspicions, a loss of thought and the inability to say what is on your mind, as well as other symptoms such as anxiety and depression. However, if these symptoms are ongoing, and interfere with your ability to cope with daily life, it is important to seek help.



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The experts in mental illness often interchange the terms mentally ill and disorders since one term means that a patient has a disturbance in normal patterns and the other means that a patient will need ongoing treatment for the disturbances. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) will assist in defining the various mental illnesses as well as how to manage the condition.

Most of our patients who are on neuroleptic medicines suffer from either extrapyramidal side effect or tardive dyskinesia. An interesting method to distinguish between the two, as explained in the DSM, is the Abnormal Involuntary Movement Scale (AIMS). After interviewing the patient, the scale will help to distinguish between the two and a pharmacist will be able to assist in managing the patient accordingly. This makes it easier in deciding which medicines can be given to the patient.

Especially during the current COVID-19 pandemic, we as healthcare professionals are faced with a lot of challenges. Whether it be the stresses of having to supply stock of which there is a shortage, or the amount of critically ill patients we see. All of this contributes to our mental state. We might find ourselves a bit short-tempered, as well as frustrated. This may result in our feeling depressed. You are not alone, there are various support mechanisms which will assist in coping with the current emotional strain we are all going through. There are healthcare workers care centres and various support groups. If the pressure becomes too much for you, feel free to contact them. Most people say it is a weakness to seek help, but on the contrary, it takes a tremendous amount of strength and courage to ask for help.