
Towards a Balanced Mental Hygiene

By M.K. Al-Haddad

Chairman
Psychiatric Hospital Bahrain

MENTAL illness is a major health problem, perhaps the biggest health problem of our times. It is also a major social problem.

It is wrong to think of Psychiatric patients as simply being a mental institution problem, for they are not so, neither do we accept the concept of Psychiatric patients being afflicted with ailments of the mind (versus those with bodily disease). It was widely believed that mental patients, because of their incapacity to "Know what is in their Best Interest" must be cared for by the state and be sent to the mental asylum even if that was against their will and meant incarceration in the mental hospital. We believe that this entire system of inter locking concepts, beliefs and practices is wrong and immoral.

There is now a general recognition of the significance of social and environmental aspects of mental illness and the need for providing help for the mentally ill in a non-medical, non-hospital setting.

Early intervention at home and at the community level can often serve to prevent the condition deteriorating to the point at which a severe crisis occurs and hospital admission becomes the only possible solution.

One way of solving this is to go to the community at large for treatment and education of the public. The community shoulders and shares the responsibility not only for those who are mentally afflicted but also for the maintenance of its heritage of cultural and moral values.

Over the past one or two decades there has been cultural changes especially amongst the educated and urbanised population, some have renounced the old culture, yet so far have failed to assimilate the new ... this is making them particularly prone to malignant anxiety and mental stress. On the society's ability to solve the problem of urbanisation and industrialization and finding solutions to the challenges brought home lies the answer for a "Normal" adaptation and balanced mental hygiene. □□