Physically ill patients have three to four times more likely to develop mental illness than the general population. About half of hospital psychiatric patients have diagnosable psychiatric disorder. The proportion is even higher if taking into account of those patients who have normal reaction like feeling depressed or anxious as a result of the physical illness. The co-morbidity may complicate the help seeking behaviour, diagnosis and treatment of the disease [1]. Conversely, mental disorders increase risk for communicable and non-communicable diseases. As a result, this will incur higher cost for the country to spend on health sector. Hence integrating mental health care into the management of physically ill patients is highly needed.

In United Kingdom, the present Coalition Government is aware of the social and economic consequences if mental health care is not taken seriously. They have agreed good mental health and resilience are fundamental to our physical health [2]. In this project, a set of shared objectives was outlined: (i) More people will have good mental health, (ii) More people with mental health problems will recover, (iii) More people with mental health problems will have good physical health, (iv) More people will have a positive experience of care and support, (v) Fewer people will suffer avoidable harm and (vi) Fewer people will experience stigma and discrimination. It was emphasized on the improvement within the general hospital setting being ALERT to five priority areas [3]:

Awareness of the link between physical and mental health needs to be heightened.

Liaison Psychiatry Services are required in all general hospitals

Engaging Patients & Carers is essential in improving services

Re-organisation, Commissioning & Quality Standards – Liaison mental health services should be commissioned and reviewed against agreed specific service standards

Training & Education needs to be improved for all healthcare professionals

We have to look at our health policies in Malaysia. The mental health burden cannot be underestimated and the interactions between mental illness and physical diseases need to be heightened. On that note, there is no other word to argue but to agree that there is no health without mental health.

References


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