

EDITORIAL

A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body

Zainal NZ

**Department of Psychological Medicine, Faculty of Malaya,
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

Mind and body are two entities that are interrelated to each other¹. A person cannot be considered as healthy only with the absence of physical disease if the mind is not at peace. On the other hand, the mind would be disturbed if any parts of the body become sick.

This concept of healthy well-being is not something new. The slogan was emphasized long time ago by the World Health Organization. Numerous research studies on this issue have been conducted, and the findings have been recommended to be implemented in clinical practice.

Epidemiological research studies on the relationship between mental health variables and physical disease are commonly conducted, be it cross-sectional, retrospective or prospective studies. Each of the research methods has its own advantages and disadvantages. Longer follow-up prospective studies may enlighten us with a better picture of the causal relationship between any risk factors and the disease outcome. Conversely, retrospective studies may expose to recall bias.

In the recent years, biological changes have been widely studied to look at the molecular and cellular activities in the body¹ as a result of chronic stress that may lead to diseases such as cardiovascular disease², cancer³ and brain structure changes. This may be

mediated by the stress hormones such as cortisol, suppressed neurogenesis, decrease neuroplasticity, reduce resilience or immunological changes. The effects of chronic stress on Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) axis function have been studied in both animal models and clinical populations⁴. In the presence of stress, an impact on estrogen activity in mammary gland that may initiate pro-tumorigenic changes may lead to breast cancer³.

There is more and more evidence to emphasize the importance of maintaining a healthy mind as the fundamental of resilience to physical illnesses. Therefore, a clinician must not ignore or neglect the psychological issues that may have contributed to the physical symptoms manifested by his/her patients or to the physical disease suffered.

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Corresponding Author

Professor Nor Zuraida Zainal

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Email: zuraida@ummc.edu.my