Why should physicians care about emotional health?

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Emotional disorders play a central role in presentation of physical disease
Emotional disorders: The facts

• Anxiety disorders
• Mood disorders
• Commonly comorbid

• The most prevalent mental disorders
• Greatest burden of disease
• Early onset and chronic
• Have marked impact at subclinical levels
Prevalence of anxiety disorders
Prevalence of emotional disorders in primary care - Roca et al, 2009

Anxiety

Depression

Primary care

Community
Proportion of population with physical disease and risks – NSMHW 2007
Impact of emotional disorder on disease - Katon et al. 2006

• Somatic sx often correlate more with emotional disorders than with objective markers
• Systematic review 31 studies ~ 17,000 patients
• Comorbid medical and emotional – reported more medical sx for same severity of disease
• Tx of depression – decrease in medical sx without change in physiological measures
Work impact of anxiety, depression, and chronic disease – Bokma et al., 2017

Odds relative to no illness

- Absenteeism (> 2 wks)
  - Pure disease
  - Disease + emotional disorder

- Impaired work performance
  - Pure disease
  - Disease + emotional disorder
How does emotional disorder impact physical disease?

• Direct physiological change
  • Physiological components of emotion – magnified pathology
• Biased information processing
  • Increased attention to somatic symptoms
  • Misinterpretation of benign symptoms
  • More negative recall of symptoms
• Poorer adherence to self care
  • Less attention to doctor’s instructions
  • Less engagement in diet, exercise
  • Poorer medication adherence
How good are doctors at diagnosing emotional disorders? – Gates et al., 2016
By recognising emotional disorders in your patients

- Deal with a major source of symptoms and distress
- Identify a central source of life impairment
- Prevent potential barriers to treatment and improvement
- Provide a potentially modifiable target for treatment
Emotional disorders are treatable

• Treatment with SSRI or CBT
• Full remission of depression and anxiety disorders in youth and adult populations ~ 40-70%
Further Information and Resources

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02/ 9850-8711