

Patient Suicides - The way ahead

What is the issue?

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- A senior IPS officer had recently committed suicide, due to depression caused by a prolonged chronic illness.

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- Monitoring the mental health of patients is vital to avoid such episodes.

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What is the state of patients committing suicide?

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- Family problems account for the most number of suicides in India, accounting for 27.6% of all suicides.

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- This is followed by illness driven suicides which stands at a whopping 15.8%.

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- Hence, sad moods or odd behaviour should not be brushed aside as a “normal reaction” to being ill and should be seen as possible symptoms of depression.

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- Doctors and family need to keep a close eye on symptoms of depression in the patients who happen suffer chronic or long lasting disorders/diseases.

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What drives suicides?

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- Most patients who commit suicide aren't at their terminal stage but the ones who can't mentally cope with the initial stages of the illness.
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- Patients suffering from a prolonged illness are affected as they miss out on a lot in life, which is taken for granted by others.
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- They have to make many lifestyle changes and simultaneously cope with the side effects of medication.
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- These are highly stressful for a vast majority of the patients as they find it difficult to make peace with their new situation.
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- In addition to this, some also have to go through eternal chronic pain, which is the main reason that drives them to suicide.
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How do we address this problem?

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- While illness is what causes depression usually, in considerable number of cases, it is the medication that creates depression.
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- Continuous counselling and keeping a close eye on depressive symptoms in patients is the key to preventing illness driven suicides.
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- Counselling should not be isolated as a psychiatric measure, but should rather be incorporated to an extent within the conventional treatment centres.
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- All physicians and medical staff treating such patients need to be able to pick up depressive symptoms through a patient's mannerism.
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Source: The Hindu

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