Heralding a new era

Dr.D.Srinivasan¹, Dr.G.K.Kannan², Dr.Jayakumar Menon³

¹ Consultant Psychiatrist, Coimbatore.

² Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Chennai.

³ Consultant Psychiatrist, SriRamachandra Medical Centre, Chennai.

The domains of Psychiatry and Neurosciences have progressed from being poor cousins of Medicine to becoming one of the frontier fields in modern medicine, incorporating cutting edge science and research initiatives and influencing diverse areas like management, humanities, conflict resolution, development, organisational systems, astronomy, sports etc. After the decade of the brain, it seems the field has taken off to hitherto unimagined heights. Needless to say, we are in exciting times.

However, as is always the case, modern times have modern problems, and it is not surprising that newer problems are being addressed by the mental health professionals worldwide. The tides of change have not spared the Indian shores with internet and globalisation providing a foundation for a new global ethics of relating and communicating, as well as bringing in its wake, a host of problems related to human minds. Increasing fragmentation of old social orders, nuclear families, heightened social pressures to perform and achieve, wider prevalence of drugs of abuse, and the impending demographic shift of the population to the senior age group bring huge challenges to the mental health field. Problematic use of the internet, and the huge gap in dementia and aged care services are just two examples of the many that require urgent attention and research.

The Indian Psychiatric Society has been a flag-bearer of the Psychiatric community in India. Indian Journal of Psychiatry has set a high standard in ensuring scientific rigor and promoting research, providing solutions applicable to the Indian population. The state of Tamilnadu has a rich tradition of leading the nation in many areas of psychiatric research with many governmental institutions and NGOs providing invaluable scientific evidence about the nature, course, factors influencing the outcome, and recovery pathways for psychiatric illnesses and the efficacy of specific interventions in our population. There has been a considerable increase in the number of mental health professionals in our country during the last decade. However the prevalence and burden of mental illness still remain high in our population.

Taking all these into context, the TamilNadu chapter of the IPS felt it was important to encourage the field of research in mental health and neurosciences in India further, by providing a platform for publishing high quality research papers from India and overseas with the ultimate aim of benefiting the public at large. The editorial team hopes to achieve this with the whole hearted support from the fraternity at home and worldwide.

In our first issue, we have a series of invited articles, from some of the top researchers in their respective fields working in and outside India. The major themes covered in this inaugural is-

sue are as diverse as Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Geriatric Psychiatry, First Episode Psychosis, Psychiatric Rehabilitation, and Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry.

Vaitheeswaran et al's review article on geriatric psychiatry gives a grim reminder of the huge gap in geriatric services in our community (90%). He expounds the various systemic barriers in providing care and highlights the methods to reduce unmet need. The section on the two most challenging psycho-geriatric problems dementia and depression is insightful in providing an overview of the problem.

Raghavan et al's review on First Episode Psychosis(FEP) studies from India is a comprehensive and critical look at the field. The strength of the article lies in the fact that it has strived to identify the bio-psycho-social factors implicated in FEP in the Indian context by focusing not only at the patient but also at the carers. The review summarises the multiple barriers in provision of care, and reiterates the need to provide early interventions considering the higher risk of patient suicide and reduction in distress in the patient and family members and elucidates practical suggestions for the same.

Kandasamy et al, elegantly describe the interventional studies for ASD in developing countries and discuss the various steps in translating research into practice. They also highlight the importance of close coordination between the different stakeholders to achieve this worthy goal.

The article by Menon et al, dwells into the complicated relationship between medical disorders and depression. The challenges in diagnosing depression in medically unwell patients are discussed. They further elaborate on the issues to be considered while treating depression in patients with medical disorders. Good liaison between psychiatry and medical services is a necessary foundation to achieve desired outcomes in such cases.

In the review article on rehabilitation Dr Tirupati eloquently describes and differentiates the 3-Rs Remediation, Restoration & Reconnection which are foundational in this area of work. He further expounds how to operationalise these concepts in practice.

Dr Vangili's case series draws our attention to an important area in the field of developmental disorders. Children with developmental disorders are more prone to develop mental disorders and could develop suicidal behaviour. Systematic evaluation including screening questions for suicidality could enable early identification and appropriate response.

Much thought and effort have gone into the creation of this issue. Numerous individuals have given their advise and support in setting this up. We would like to wholeheartedly thank each and everyone for their contribution and support. We believe this to be a collective effort, and welcome your invaluable suggestions and constructive criticism to constantly improve the content and quality of the journal, and set higher standards in the future.

D.Srinivasan,
Editor.