

Mental Health Campaigns May Result in Mild Distress Being Reported as Mental Health Problems, New Research Finds

Mental health awareness campaigns may contribute to individuals overreporting mental disorders, inflating the reported US mental health crisis.

WASHINGTON, DC, US, April 6, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new research [paper](#) provides evidence that rising rates of mental health problems have been fueled to some extent by the mental health awareness programs that were meant to reduce those problems.

Lucy Foulkes, PhD, research fellow at Oxford University in the U.K., and Jack L. Andrews, PhD, research fellow at University New South Wales in Australia, noted that there have been extensive efforts over the past decade to raise public awareness about mental health, but that reported rates of mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and suicide, have increased over that time.

They explored the idea that while mental health awareness initiatives can cause some people to recognize a serious mental health condition and seek help, others overreact and when asked, report their symptoms from everyday stress as mental disorders.

“[Our hypothesis] proposed that awareness efforts are leading some individuals to unnecessarily consider milder or more transient psychological difficulties as mental health problems that require labelling, reporting and treating – i.e., problems of living that were not previously considered mental health problems, and still should not be,” Foulkes wrote in *New Ideas in Psychology*.



The increasing tendency for individuals to view their ups and down in life as symptoms of mental disorders can increase their risk of overdiagnosis and overtreatment and undermine their own resilience, research indicates.

The researchers found ample evidence to support their theory. They cite research showing the increasing tendency for individuals to view their ups and downs in life as symptoms of mental disorders, increasing their risk of [overdiagnosis and overtreatment](#) and undermining their own [resilience](#) in the face of adversity.

Some mental health awareness campaigns seem to encourage individuals to use psychiatric terminology to express their negative psychological experiences as mental health conditions, according to Foulkes, which can lead to inflated rates of mental health problems. She also referenced research indicating that learning about symptoms of mental health conditions causes some individuals to experience an increase in their symptoms. [1]



Mental health awareness programs appear to be contributing to the increasing rates of mental health problems.

“There is some existing evidence that learning about psychiatric concepts and language might indeed increase mental health problems,” writes Foulkes.

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We hypothesize that [mental health] awareness efforts may be leading to an increased and excessive tendency to interpret negative psychological experiences as mental health problems.

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Lucy Foulkes, PhD, Research Fellow, Oxford University, U.K.

Promoting psychiatric concepts and language to the public is widespread and comes from many sources, including drug companies, mental health practitioners, mental health advocacy groups, schools, workplaces, lawmakers, and celebrities.

Having a mental health issue may even be a popular trend currently. “Interpreting and describing one’s difficulties as a mental health problem might now have social value and therefore be desirable for some individuals,” writes Foulkes. “This could explain why mental health problems are now sometimes glamorized or romanticized,

particularly on social media.”

Still other research cited indicates that misreading life problems as mental health problems or assigning mental disorders through self-diagnosis, brought on by exposure to psychiatric concepts and language, can cause or worsen an individual’s psychological symptoms in a self-

fulfilling prophecy. [1]

“Considering these factors, we hypothesize that awareness efforts may be leading to an increased and excessive tendency to interpret negative psychological experiences as mental health problems,” Foulkes concluded.

This further suggests that rates of depression, anxiety, suicide attempts and other mental health conditions that have been widely reported as “a mental health crisis” in the U.S. could not only be inflated, but highly inflated and, therefore, highly unreliable.

Psychiatric diagnoses themselves have no scientific basis, but are assigned based on the subjective opinion of the evaluator. Psychiatrist Thomas Insel, MD, former director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), rattled the psychiatric field in 2013 by writing in his blog on the NIMH website that there is no objective, scientific validity for psychiatry’s “diagnoses” of mental disorders. This means there is no science behind, and no quality control possible for, mental health practitioners assigning patients with psychiatric labels. [2]

Likewise, psychiatrist Allen Frances, MD, professor emeritus of psychiatry at Duke University School of Medicine and chairman of the task force for the 4th edition of the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, stated that “there are not objective tests in psychiatry – no X-ray, laboratory or exam finding that says definitively that someone does or does not have a mental disorder.”

“This begs the question of why Americans are being instructed in unscientific psychiatric concepts and terminology in mental health campaigns, which can result in individuals’ emotional and behavioral challenges in life being wrongly identified and treated as psychiatric disorders, along with the risk of their psychological symptoms worsening,” says Anne Goedeke, president of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights, National Affairs Office.

The Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) continues to raise public awareness of the risks of harm from psychiatric practices and drugs, so that consumers and their physicians can make fully informed decisions about starting or stopping treatment. CCHR supports safe and science-based non-drug approaches to mental health.

CCHR also recommends a complete physical examination with lab tests, nutritional and allergy screenings, and a review of all current medications to identify any physical causes of unwanted mental and emotional symptoms, which might otherwise be misdiagnosed and incorrectly treated as a psychiatric disorder.

WARNING: Anyone wishing to discontinue or change the dose of a psychiatric drug is cautioned to do so only under the supervision of a physician because of potentially dangerous withdrawal symptoms.

The Citizens Commission on Human Rights was co-founded in 1969 by members of the Church of Scientology and the late psychiatrist and humanitarian Thomas Szasz, M.D., recognized by many academics as modern psychiatry's most authoritative critic, to eradicate abuses and restore human rights and dignity to the field of mental health. CCHR has been instrumental in obtaining 228 laws against psychiatric abuses and violations of human rights worldwide.

The CCHR National Affairs Office in Washington, DC, has advocated for mental health rights and protections at the state and federal level. The CCHR traveling exhibit, which has toured 441 major cities worldwide and educated over 800,000 people on the history to the present day of abusive and racist psychiatric practices, has been displayed at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Annual Legislative Conference in Washington, DC, and at other locations.

[1] <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0732118X2300003X>

[2] <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/cross-check/psychiatry-in-crisis-mental-health-director-rejects-psychiatric-bible-and-replaces-with-nothing/>

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