

'Gas Syndrome' - A Culture Bound Syndrome

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Abstract

Culture refers to the shared patterns of feelings, beliefs and behaviour that reflect in the way of living in a society. Culture uniquely influence the role functioning or psychosocial wellbeing of people living in a given society by exerting influence on their mind by their traditional health beliefs. Cultural factors influence understanding, presentation, diagnosis, management, course and outcome of many diseases, especially psychiatric disorders. Culture-bound syndromes seem to be episodic, dramatic and discrete patterns of behavioral reactions specific to a particular community that articulate both personal predicament and public concerns. Every culture provides explanations and causal attributions for somatic symptoms. One of the common complaints of persons coming to medical attention is 'Gas' or similar terminologies like 'vayu' etc. People attribute varied symptoms from abdominal discomfort, chest pain, headache, joint pains, back pain, somatic complaints to 'Gas'. 'Gas' is reported to be the cause for the distress and the primary duty of the treating clinician is to relieve them of the gas. The problem of troubling Gas or vayu has been influencing Indian culture/tradition since ancient days. We do see a significant proportion of patients visiting varied specialists attributing all their problems to Gas. 'Gas Syndrome' is proposed as a culture bound syndrome.

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