

Can't schizophrenia patients have physical illnesses like us?

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Dear Editor,

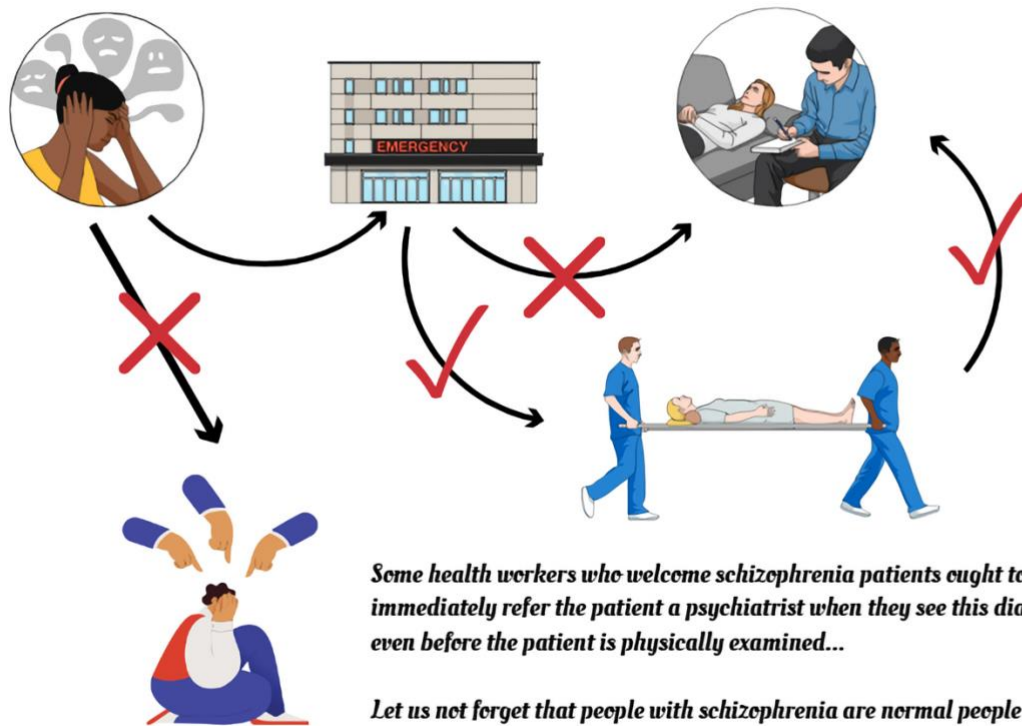
The reason I am writing this letter is to question the attitudes of some healthcare professionals toward patients with schizophrenia and to initiate a discussion that will break down their prejudices, if any. Most healthcare professionals do not have a stigma against psychiatric patients within the framework of professional ethics. Therefore, it is not right to put all healthcare professionals under suspicion based on the few cases we have mentioned. The stigmatization of people with schizophrenia is quite common all over the world. This is also true for the healthcare community (1).

In many studies, it has been reported that some chronic psychiatric patient groups, such as schizophrenia patients, are less valued and stigmatized by physical health professionals to whom they present due to physical complaints (2). However, these patients deserve more attention. Because schizophrenia patients may develop more physical diseases than other people. In addition, these patients have more difficulty expressing themselves than other people. Some health workers who welcome schizophrenia patients brought to the emergency room may immediately refer the patient to a psychiatrist when they see this diagnosis in the patient's history, even before the patient is physically examined. For example, in one case, a schizophrenia patient who was brought to the emergency room in a semi-conscious state was sent to a psychiatrist without deepening his history. Let us not forget that people with schizophrenia are normal people like us. They can have all the illnesses that others have. They may even have higher rates of physical illness than other people. For example, their blood sugar and blood pressure may rise more, and they may have higher rates of heart attacks (3).

When a schizophrenia patient is brought to the emergency room, the first physician called is not a psychiatrist. Our first priority should be to identify his or her condition with an empathic approach.

After the history, physical examination, laboratory tests, and imaging, if there is no organic cause that can explain the patient's current condition and the patient's physical health is stable, it would be a better approach to refer the patient to a psychiatrist. Otherwise, trying to attribute the incident to psychiatric causes only and seeing the incident as simple will lead to a waste of time and perhaps put the patient's life at risk. If the incident results in death, many legal and conscientious responsibilities may ruin the future life of the health worker concerned. A graphical illustration of the study is shown in Figure 1.

In conclusion, people with schizophrenia have the same body as everyone else, can be affected by the disease, and therefore deserve the same attention.



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Figure 1. Graphical illustration.

Disclosures

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