

## SPIRITUALITY, PSYCHIATRY AND CBT: RECONCILING FAITH IN THERAPY

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Pakistan is a country of over 200 million people having 98% of the population is practicing Islam as its religion.<sup>1,2</sup> The prevalence of psychiatric disorders across the globe is 10-16% means more than 20 million people of Pakistan are struggling through some psychiatric issues.<sup>1,2</sup> There are only 0.002 Psychiatrists available per 100,000 population, averaging >20% psychiatrists leave the country in each year.<sup>1,2</sup> In Pakistan, 75-86% psychiatric patients do not have an access to Psychiatrist or mental health professional termed as Mental Health Gap (mhGAP) due to multifactorial reasons including stigma.<sup>3</sup>

World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.<sup>4</sup> Spirituality elaborates as personal views and behaviors that express a sense of relatedness to a transcendental dimension or to something greater than self.<sup>5,6</sup> For all of human history we have been striving for one goal; the spiritual reunification of mankind with God the divine intelligence that lives within us.

Spirituality is regarded as one of the four components of overall well-being.<sup>5</sup> The four essential components of an individual, as noted by Mohr et al, are the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions.<sup>5</sup> Research has shown that spirituality is associated with values of wholeness, hope, meaning, harmony, and transcending. These values help individuals cope with stressors in the world and strive toward reaching their natural potential. In one of the work done by Mohr et al; spiritual inclination instilled hope (71%), enhanced social integration (28%), reduced the risk of suicide (33%), reduced use of psychoactive substances by 14% and played a significant role in reducing or managing prevalence of psychiatric disorders by 15% in general population.<sup>6</sup> An important question raised whether the patients should screen for spiritual assessment keeping in mind that Spirituality plays a role of critical life factor.<sup>7</sup>

Spiritual assessment guide (SAG) revised many times and are widely used among patients residing in nursing homes, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse issues and among cancer patients.<sup>8</sup> As a result, a validated 21-item Spiritual Assessment Scale devised encompassing three significant areas, i.e., Personal faith, religious practice and spiritual contentment.<sup>8</sup>

Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) is a psychosocial intervention that aims to improve mental health like managing depressive disorders.<sup>9</sup> CBT focuses on challenging cognitive distortions (thoughts, beliefs and actions) improving emotional regulation and the development of personal coping strategies that targets solving current problem.<sup>9</sup> Religiously integrated CBT may boost the effectiveness of conventional CBT designed by Beck and found significant improvement in patients suffering from depression among chronic medical ailments.<sup>10</sup> All three are interconnected as many researches have proved that incorporation of patient's religious beliefs into CBT improves his mental health.

Rahim Yar Khan remembered as 'Phul Wadda' witnessed Islam almost 800 years back after the passage of Muhammad Bin Qasim.<sup>11</sup> First Islamic government was established by Shahab-ud-din Ghouri and he made Uch Sharif as the capital of Sindh and Multan.<sup>11</sup> First state of the art 'Madarsah' (teaching religious school) for 1000 students were established at Uch Sharif by Nasir-ud-din Qabacha.<sup>11</sup> Qazi Minhaj-us-Siraj was nominated as the first Head of Islamic Madarsah at Uch Sharif.<sup>11</sup> First masterpiece 22 volume book 'Tabqat-e-Nasiri' upon Islamic history was written by Qazi Minhaj-us-Siraj and he later served as Chief Qazi at Delhi.<sup>11</sup> This marked the beginning of khanqahs, dargahs, madrassahs and Multan-Uch Sharif became the nuclei of variant religious schools of Islam. Poet-Philosopher Khwaja Ghulam Fareed contributed a great deal in the spreading of mystic version of Islam 150 years back through his poetry and introduced the concept of 'love for Rohi'.<sup>12,13</sup> This concept later reflected into the music of Pathaney Khan, Abida Parveen<sup>13</sup> showed the importance of religiosity and spirituality into the collective unconscious of the people belonging to this area.

Keeping in view the importance of cultural background, prevalent mental health issues, mental health gap (mhGAP) between patients and mental health professionals; there is an utmost need to develop the 'culturally integrated therapeutic model'. Pakistan Association of Cognitive Therapist (PACT), Pakistan Psychiatric Society (PPS), World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation (WAPR) in collaboration with Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Sheikh Zayed Medical College/Hospital decided

to organize thematic 9<sup>th</sup> International CBT Conference at Rahim Yar Khan on Spirituality, Psychiatry and CBT: Reconciling faith in therapy. The aim of the conference is to bring together researches, presenters, academicians, in the field of mental health within the country and across the globe.

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