

## The crucial role of management guidelines for mental disorders: Bangladesh perspective

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In recent years, the significance of mental health has gained widespread recognition, prompting discussions on the need for effective management guidelines of common and major mental disorders. The development and implementation of comprehensive management guidelines for mental disorders are of utmost importance in addressing this global health challenge. For a country like Bangladesh mental health is an emerging issue in policy design, service delivery and capacity development and to ensure universal mental health coverage, a strategic plan has already been developed. In the 'National Mental Health Strategic Plan 2020-2030', the second objective aims 'To provide comprehensive, integrated and responsive mental health and social care services in community-based settings' and fourth objective aims 'To strengthen information systems, evidence and research for mental health'. Both objectives and the whole vision of the National Mental Health Strategic Plan demand development of uniform and holistic management guidelines for major and common mental health disorders.

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Bangladesh Association of Psychiatrists (BAP) came forward and took initiative to develop guidelines for common and major mental disorders. From 2021 to 2022 the several expert and technical committees developed five management guidelines for major and common mental disorders. These BAP guidelines are developed for the management of bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, obsessive compulsive disorders, depressive disorders, and anxiety disorders. These guidelines provide essential frameworks for assessment process, early intervention, evidence-based treatment, management for special population, management at non-specialized settings and support systems that can significantly improve the lives of those affected. All those guidelines considered the country context and cultural issues by following a rigorous scientific method during guideline development.

These five management guidelines are playing a crucial role in promoting early identification and intervention for five mental health conditions by establishing clear criteria and assessment process. The objectives of these guideline are to provide clear, concise and uniform information to all psychiatrists as well as other physicians on the current concept in the management of bipolar disorder,

schizophrenia, obsessive compulsive disorders, depressive disorders and anxiety disorders. The guidelines were intended to develop a uniform, updated, culturally compatible, contextualized evidence based and comprehensive management for those five mental health conditions. Timely identification facilitates early intervention, increases the chances of successful treatment and recovery. Early intervention can also help prevent the escalation of mental health conditions, reducing the burden on individuals, families, and healthcare systems as needed by Bangladesh.

These management guidelines were developed based on desk review of other clinical guidelines, systematic reviews, consensus among experts, focus group discussion with experts and clinical evidence, ensuring that individuals receive evidence-based treatment for their disorders. These guidelines outline the most effective and appropriate interventions, including pharmacological treatments, psychotherapies, and management for special population with mental disorders. By adhering to these guidelines, psychiatrists and other physicians can provide standardized, quality care that aligns with the best available evidence. The consistency offered here will enhance

treatment outcomes, reduce trial-and-error approaches, and minimize the risk of inappropriate or ineffective treatments. There are specific portions dedicated for the management of mentioned mental health conditions in non-specialized settings.

These management guidelines establish standardized care protocols, promoting consistency across healthcare settings and professionals. By following these guidelines, healthcare providers can ensure that individuals with five mental disorders receive equitable care, regardless of their geographic location or socioeconomic background. Uniformity of management process will help prevent variations in treatment approaches, improve coordination among healthcare professionals, and foster a cohesive system of care. Moreover, adherence to management guidelines will allow quality assurance, as the guidelines define benchmarks to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of mental health services from specialized settings to non-specialized settings.

The guidelines emphasized a holistic approach to care for bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, obsessive compulsive disorders, depressive disorders, and anxiety disorders, recognizing the multifaceted nature of these disorders. These guidelines emphasized the importance of comprehensive assessment, considering not only the individual's symptoms but also their personal circumstances, special presentation and situation, prognosis, social support, comorbid medical conditions, and environmental factors. By adopting a holistic approach, these management guidelines encourage professionals to address underlying causes, risk factors, and co-occurring conditions. This approach leads to more effective treatment plans, improved symptom management, and better overall well-being for individuals with five disorders.

Management guidelines also play a vital role in updating professionals, policymakers, and the public about the management of mental disorders. They provide evidence-based information that was got from focus group discussion on symptoms, risk factors, and appropriate management strategies. By disseminating this knowledge, guidelines contribute to reducing stigma, increasing awareness, and fostering a compassionate and supportive society. Education and awareness campaigns rooted in management guidelines can help challenge misconceptions surrounding mental health, empower individuals to seek help, and promote community engagement in mental health initiatives.

All the guidelines are available on the BAP website [www.bapbd.org](http://www.bapbd.org).

It is essential for governments, healthcare institutions, and stakeholders to prioritize the development, implementation, and continuous updating of management guidelines to address the crisis developed from major and common mental disorders.

The Bangladesh Association of Psychiatrists (BAP) represents the largest national association of mental health professionals in Bangladesh and works on promoting ethical and evidence-based psychiatric practice, health advocacy, policy formulation and medical research in the field of mental health, so the guidelines developed by BAP can be considered as national guidelines.

These guidelines are not for textbook use or an alternative to textbooks. The guidelines have been developed to give us a light to correct path for management. They have limitations and more scope for development, so will be updated from time to time according to clinical evidence.

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