

## Commentary

# NAVIGATING THE MIND: EXPLORING MENTAL HEALTH AMIDST MONKEYPOX

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## Description

The world suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic from 2019 to 2022. The impact of the pandemic results not only in the deaths of loved ones but also results in morbidity for a long time, known as Long-COVID. The people were not recovered from the psychological, emotional, and physical trauma of the pandemic when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared an outbreak of the monkeypox virus in 2022 [1]. The outbreak was documented in 99 countries, resulting in 15 fatalities. Monkey pox is a DNA virus that has an incubation period lasting from 7 to 14 days. The virus reaches the host cell, where it replicates and spreads to distant organs. The infection may spread from being symptomatic to the drying of scabs. Mammals belonging to any species can be infected and can be transferred from animals to humans, and *vice versa* [2]. It has now been firmly established that live animal markets, including pet markets, have a large role to play in the transmission of zoonotic diseases [3]. Research has indicated that the Huanan seafood wholesale market in Wuhan, China, was an early epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak. The seafood market was documented to have sold live wild animals, including red foxes, hog badgers, and common raccoon dogs, might be considered as possible hosts for the virus [4]. The original outbreak of monkeypox in West and Central Africa was also assumed to be due to the bushmeat and live animal market trade [5]. Studies pointed out serious mental health implications due to outbreaks not only of COVID-19 but also of monkey pox. These include stress, anxiety, hopelessness, and self-harm. People are getting into substance abuse, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts. Physicians need to watch out for mental health symptoms in these patients. Fear of being

stigmatized makes them vulnerable to nervousness, loneliness, depression, and suicidal thoughts, which they try to conceal from others. Patients with monkeypox often struggle with neuropsychiatric symptoms like migraine, cognitive impairment, and headaches, which negatively impact their mental, emotional, and social wellbeing. Social stigma increases not only the suffering of patients but also puts a strain on the economy of the health care system. People in developing countries are already under mental stress due to economic breakdown after the pandemic, inflation, an unstable environment, and joblessness, which needs to activate social support systems to comply with it. Travel restrictions are an added emotional stress for them. Stress also triggers the onset of diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and cancer. Moreover, sexual transmission is also one of the modes of transmission for monkey pox. There is a need to vaccinate against AIDS and HIV and to educate the masses about safe practices [6,7]. Education at all levels and early intervention are the need of the hour. Some of the recommendations for patients who are experiencing mental issues are to advise them to consult a therapist or counselor, who may offer coping strategies to overcome the emotional challenges. Seek accurate information about monkeypox and its effects from reliable sources like the World Health Organization (WHO) or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [8]. Guide them to stay connected with friends, family, and support groups and talk about their feelings with them. Exercise, meditation, deep breathing exercises, and engaging in hobbies will help them lessen their anxiety and alleviate depression. Guide them to celebrate achievements and set realistic goals to regain self-control. They should avoid unnecessary exposure to media except for essential information. Joining a support group

could be beneficial because it can help them recover from emotional trauma. Overcoming mental health challenges is a journey that requires the efforts of the therapist, the patient himself or herself, and the support group.

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