

Western understanding of how mental and physical illness has changed significantly throughout the centuries. Discuss the treatment of one psychological/medical issue, and evidence how the understanding and knowledge of the disorder has changed over time.

The subject of the mental illness known as depression has been acknowledged for many years, the development regarding the topic has presented to be substantial yet many individuals have yet to fully understand it, the history and how it's progressed over time; being the definition of 'depression', the symptoms of the illness and the past to present actions taken to treat said illness. The definition of depression in most recent years, is the consistence of a low mood, an overwhelming sadness that, often, effects the ability to have feeling of happiness and motivation to intake in hobbies or activities that an individual would often gain pleasure from. 'It is characterized by persistent sadness and a lack of interest or pleasure in previously rewarding or enjoyable activities. It can also disturb sleep and appetite. Tiredness and poor concentration are common.' (World Health Organization, 2019). The development of depression tracks back to thousands of years ago, to our knowledge to this day, it was firstly not recognised to be a mental illness, but a reaction to the body not functioning as it should, and or the possibility that a spiritual entity had entered the body, enticing an individual to behave in an erratic way. Many believed in the theory that a demonic spirit was the cause of such behaviours, for example, ancient Greeks and Egyptians cultures. It took many years for society to fully comprehend the complexity of depression and how to treat said illness in a healthy and humane manner.

The first known written account of depression dates back to possibly the second millennium from research conducted, it has been found that the Babylonian empires may have been the first to recognise that an individual seemed to be distressed, have the emotions of committing suicide or did commit suicide, 'Some medical texts include the term, *zikurruđû*, a Sumerian loanword meaning literally 'a cutting off (or shortening) of life'. This has been interpreted to mean 'suicide', 'attempted suicide' or 'suicidal tendencies also having acknowledged that an individual was 'constantly afraid' (Reynolds & Wilson, 2013), and recognising panic attacks when occurred. Presently, it would be instantly known that these are common symptoms of depression, beknown to them, making their empire the first to witness and write the first description of the mood disorder. The Babylonian empire constructed the idea that the God's were angry with the individuals, wanting them to suffer, they would punish them with sleepless nights and low moods; resulting in needing the help of a priest, to perform a ritual. A priest would perform a burial ritual in hopes that it would break the condition, or possibly be taken in from someone else. Yet from their knowledge of the struggling individuals, they had not invented a word to describe the possible cause. It is said that a millennium later, the second written account of depression was made yet it was not recognised by the term 'depression', but that of 'melancholia'. A Greek physician Hippocrates, now known as 'The father of medicine' (Brainsway, 2020), created the theory that the human body was constructed from four substances known as 'humors'. The theory was that if all four humors were balanced an individual was healthy, if they were not, that would in turn lead to sickness. The four humors were that of, black bile, yellow bile, blood, phlegm; such had recognisable symptoms to diagnose if the levels of each were incorrect. Symptoms of too little or too much of one of the humors, known as black bile, are again highly recognisable to our present-day society, as symptoms of depression, for example, loss of appetite, irritability, restlessness, leading researchers to believe the term melancholia translates to depression. 'Many consider it to be one of the first attempts to create the science that

would become psychology 2,000 years later'. (Kenneth, 2019). The physician believed the treatment for elevated levels of black bile was simple, he used to vary different methods such as, administering the use of certain substances to cause vomiting and or diarrhoea, which was thought to expel excess black bile for the intestines. The methods of bloodletting were used, also, the idea to keep the patient in a warm environment was thought to prove beneficial, using a warm bath or feeding the patient warm, moist soup or meat was thought to improve the illness. A famous poem written by the author John Keats is an informative insight of an individual suffering from Melancholia, but from a positive light, it helps to fully understand the perspective of someone during the era but a beautiful rendition to understand that it is not a cause to lose hope, 'Ode on Melancholy' (Dalli, 2016). Expanding on the theory presented by Hippocrates, A Greek physician, also a philosopher, by the name of Galen recognised that not only did the humors affect the body physically, but also played a part in affecting the patient's personalities. Examining personality traits exhibited by the patients, such as anti-social behaviour and over thinking, Galen had come to realise that the patients were showing emotional traits at the sadder end of the spectrum, thus starting the eventual evolution of depression. The importance of treating illness became clearer over time as cultures gained more information of the vast subject, thus the creation of hospitals; early records of hospitals were developed by the Byzantine empire in the time around the 7th to 8th century, creating hospitals which their developed from Christian institutions. 'Philanthropy provided the initial impulse to create hospices (xenons) and to expand these institutions into specialized medical centres (iatreons or nosokomeions)' (Józsa, 2011). Both Christian and Muslim cultures firmly believed that the sick should be cared for sincerely, ensuring the upmost treatment, each patient would be provided with private beds, always kept warm and washed before and after each examination. Yet during the 15th century, the era of the Middle Ages, treatment for some mentally ill patients could be described as inhumane. During this time period, there was little to no knowledge of the vast types of mental disorders, they would still differentiate themselves from the sick by acknowledging them as 'insane', stating that had become possessed with evil spirits. Most individuals struggling from a mental disorder would become outcasts, those who had access to a hospital, were kept separating from the sick, they would receive treatment in the form of baths, simplistic medicines and would receive food twice a day. The more violent patients would receive the awful treatment in the form of beatings and being confined in what would be describes as gloomy cells, the use of religious interventions was also used if believed that the patient was possessed by an evil spirit. The evolution of depression began with a German psychiatrist in the 19th century, known as Emil Kraepelin; resulting from clinical observation, Kraepelin came to a hypothesis that not one singular symptom could lead to a diagnosis but that of certain mixture of symptoms shown from the patient being evaluated. 'Clinical observation led him to the hypothesis that specific combinations of symptoms in relation to the course of psychiatric illnesses.' (Bar & Ebert, 2010). The term depression was firstly gathered from Kraepelin's work, as on numerous occasions, he would use the term 'depressive states' (Brainsway, 2020) in relation to melancholia, when conducting his clinical research, he was also able to differentiate two forms of depression. Another individual with an extraordinary title in relation to the subject was that of Sigmund Freud, 'The father of psychoanalysis' (Brainsway, 2020); he gathered his own opinion of the topic, stating this in his own assignment, Freud has written that this mood disorder was caused by that of mourning, the loss of a loved one having a substantial effect on the brain that it quite cannot comprehend; 'Mourning and Melancholia'. (Clewel, 2004). This discovery enhanced the way in which depression would be treated; during the mid-20th century, the use of anti-depressant medication was given to patients who were identified to be struggle with the mood disorder, it had begun to be the most effective and common treatment in healthcare internationally. The positive results from the medication confirmed that the mood disorder was that of genetic and brain function, within recent years, also

the discovery for therapy, exercise and diet as a treatment has grown in popularity to treat depression with medication sometimes providing undesired side effects. The use of the alternative treatments has grown in popularity over recent years, potentially due to the ongoing pandemic, known as Covid 19. With the instructions to remain at home, increase in extensive rules, social distancing and healthcare providers being in demand for the physically ill, many were left to discover ways to improve their own health independently if possible. Statistics show that the reports of depression increased by 25% (World Health Organization, 2022), potentially during the required lockdowns throughout the pandemic, thus many individuals seeking the help from therapists. CBT, cognitive behaviour therapy, IPT, interpersonal therapy, are just two examples of therapy that has proven beneficial to help relieve symptoms of depression, thus the increased demand for said therapy in recent years. With much healthcare advisements available at home, society also has the knowledge to improve their mood disorder; for example, to attain a healthy diet and the use of exercise when possible. Though research can confirm the importance of seeking help for the mood disorder, during recent years the stigma of depression, being it may be a ploy to seek attention or a weakness, has prevented a vast majority of society to seek the help that they need, in result, approximately 80% of individuals internationally go without the help from professionals. (Rolandi, 2017). The outcome to the stigma is the unfortunate large number of recorded suicides in the previous few years, during the year of 2021, statistics show that 5,583 people committed suicide, being equivalent to 10.7 deaths to 100,000 individuals, (Office for National Statistics, 2022), mostly of the male gender. Professionals and the public are now working to defuse the stigma that has been developed over recent years, positive actions have been put into place to encourage society to understand the meaning of depression, how it can affect you physically and mentally, potentially giving the extra push to come forward to seek the help needed, as it will only be beneficial.

After reviewing and evaluating the history of treatment options decided by many cultures, it has helped to gain perspective on the subject, to critique many of the previous methods shown is not that of misunderstanding but that of scientific purpose, due to the research required for this assignment, it has shone light that the work carried out by Hippocrates in relation to the four humors was that of observations, thus rendering his work unreliable, 'Today, people don't consider it to be scientifically viable'. (Kenneth, 2019). The treatment past patients received was questionable and the description best to describe it would be inhumane. It would be unethical to agree with the decisions carried out during the Middle Ages, the use of the words 'insane' and 'madness', the sometimes-used choice of beatings, allowing the ill to become outcasts, and locking the patients away in solitude deem to be unfair. Also, due to recent knowledge of the subject, the desire to ensure all individuals receive the correct treatment for mental health is critical, the importance to decrease the recorded number of suicides should be a main priority moving forward into the future. It is significant that it has been acknowledged as a serious issue and should be continued to remain a dominant subject to change until statistics decrease.

The understanding and treatment for depression has developed substantially over history, from the first evidential account of depression to the present day. The acknowledgement of perceiving another individual might be experiencing stress, was the beginning of what we know now to be a very common mood disorder experienced by many; then the discovery of the physical symptoms of depression, though it was diagnosed to have been caused by physical attributes, it was the first account that the mood disorder had a noticeable and strong presence to the physical body and its functions. Finally resulting in the observation that the mood disorder originates in the function of the brain, which was in turn, fundamental for current society. Though, during present day society the subject has become a taboo topic, meaning the ongoing treatment for many may still be at a standstill, so to speak, but with measures in place, such as video interviews recorded from a patient's

point of view regarding the procession of struggle and diagnosis, (NHS, 2019), the future of medical or natural treatments for depression will seemingly grow incredibly advanced as it has continued to do so since the second millennium.

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