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Educational objectives:

At the conclusion of this presentation, the participant should be able to achieve a global perspective into mental illness.

Influenced by the social philosophy of Rousseau, primitive man was believed to be free of the anguish of mental illness. Studies of mental illness across cultures has brought out important differences in different illness variable: incidence, types, manifestations, outcome and treatment. In so far as variations across cultures exceed those within, culture can be said to play an important role in mental illness.

Schizophrenia has been reported from all societies, but there are differences, particularly in incidence, types and outcome. Paranoid schizophrenia appears to be less common in traditional societies. A distinctly better outcome of schizophrenia has been reported from the developing countries. Depression was felt to be less common in these countries. Personality disorders and neurotic illnesses seem to be less prevalent in developing countries. Multiple personality disorder seems to be rare. Sexual deviations are very rarely reported from many countries. Finally, the traditional, technologically less advanced countries have reported a number of specific conditions that are called culture-bound syndromes.

Separating the differences from similarities across cultures can give us better insight into the 'core' nature of a mental illness. Also, all countries can learn from each other, so as to augment the variables associated with lower incidence and better outcome; obviously a matter of great public health significance.

LITERATURE REFERENCES:

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