

HEAL



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President's Address

The Biological Basis to Illness and Healing

“There is a medicine for every disease. When the medicine is applied to the disease, it is cured by Allah’s permission” – [Muslim]

A holistic approach to healing should consider biological, psychological, social and spiritual factors that contribute to mental illness. In this issue of HEAL, we explore the biological basis behind illness and how medicine helps in the healing process.

Our brain is an intricate organ and the most essential part of the human body. It governs the operation of every system in our body. Even a minor impairment of the brain can cause devastating damage to the whole body. People who have a stroke, for example, can become paralysed or even die.

The brain performs three major functions: information processing (memory, cognition, emotion, etc.), coordination and balance, and command (of actions).

Our brain dictates our emotional experiences through the way it processes and classifies information. If the brain system responsible for our emotions is out of order, our emotions will swing, or we will display emotions that do not reflect our internal feelings, making us appear awkward.

Nerves cover the entire brain and are interconnected to form a web-like information exchange network. A nerve cell (“neuron”) looks like a leafless tree – it has branches (“dendrites”), a trunk (“axon”) and roots (“nerve endings”).

When a neuron receives messages (via electrical impulses), it transfers them along the axon to its nerve endings, which stores neurotransmitters. The space between two neurons is called a synapse. When neurotransmitters are released into the synapse and bind with receptors at the dendrites of other neurons, they determine one’s emotions, responses and actions. Once

the ‘message’ is delivered, the neurotransmitter is sent back to the transmitting neuron, where it is either broken down or repackaged.

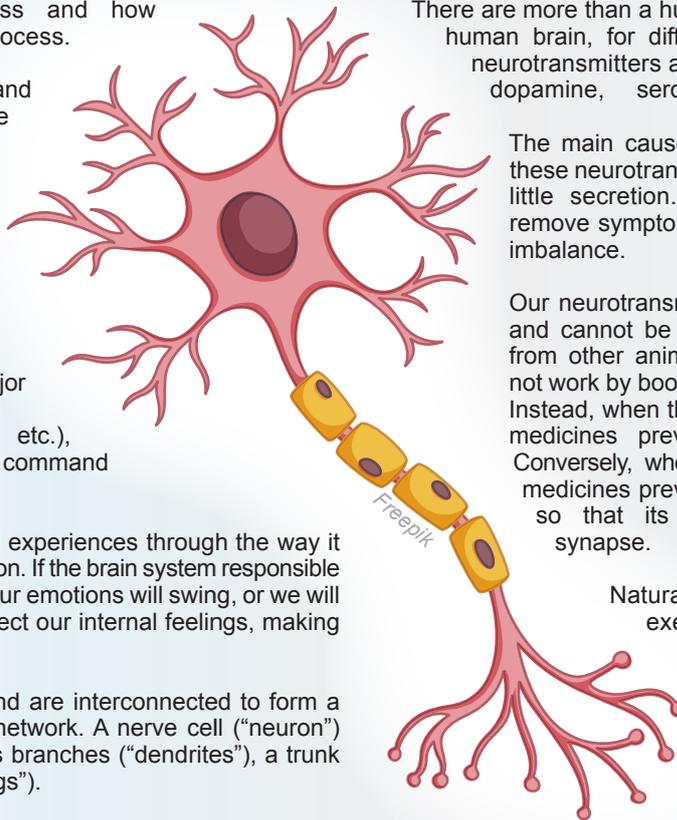
There are more than a hundred types of neurotransmitters in the human brain, for different types of messages. Four main neurotransmitters are implicated in mental health, namely, dopamine, serotonin, noradrenaline and GABA.

The main cause of mental illness is an imbalance in these neurotransmitters: there is either too much or too little secretion. Psychiatric medications alleviate or remove symptoms of mental illness by correcting such imbalance.

Our neurotransmitters have no man-made substitutes, and cannot be supplemented by chemicals extracted from other animals. Thus, psychiatric medications do not work by boosting the secretion of neurotransmitters. Instead, when there is an excess of a neurotransmitter, medicines prevent receptors from binding with it. Conversely, when there are too few neurotransmitters, medicines prevent them from being transported back, so that its concentration increases inside the synapse.

Natural biological factors such as diet, exercise and sleep, however, can affect neurotransmitter secretion. Hence, a healthy lifestyle can do wonders to our brain and help prevent or alleviate the symptoms of mental illness.

There is much hope for neurotransmitter imbalance (NTI) illness.



“Make use of medical treatment, for Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it ...” – [Abu Dawud]

About Club HEAL

Club HEAL is a charity that aims to assist and empower Peers (persons with mental health issues) to regain confidence in themselves and others in their journey towards community reintegration. It also aims to eradicate the stigma surrounding Peers thereby breaking unnecessary barriers to their recovery process. Services provided by Club HEAL include day rehabilitative services, home visits, public education, support groups and volunteer training.

A Personal Journey of Mental Illness – Medication and its Myths



By Rishah Zainal
Peer Support Specialist
Club HEAL

My Struggle in Brief

My name is Rishah Zainal and I am recovering from major depressive disorder and anxiety. It has been a trying and tiring journey. Even now, after four years, there are times when I struggle. So, I must keep reminding myself that it is okay, that this is part of me. *Some part of Rishah is made of uncomfortable feelings.*

I remember my first few episodes of anxiety attacks. I kept slipping to the toilet to cry at work. I was also much more fidgety – a racing horse was living in my body and I needed to keep moving. My work was affected, I could not focus: so much noise in my head, and flashbacks. Physically, I was seated on the chair in the office. Mentally and emotionally? Staying was torturous.

Medicine and its impact on me

It took a while for the medicine to work, but once it did, I regretted not seeking help sooner. I slept better. My train of thoughts slowed down. My inner voice quietened. I could function again.

Nevertheless, when I first took my medicine, the side effects were challenging, and I had to deal with them. I was sleepy and

fatigued, with body aches, in the day. A dry mouth was another side effect ... and sudden weight gain. There was also a numbness of the tongue that made me stutter and a facial twitch when overly anxious. These happened at the initial stage, but I have overcome them now.

Myths of medication

I was told my kidney and my organs would fail, if I consumed medication for the long term. There was also the stigma: medication was only for those who are 'gila' (insane).

The best advice I received on medication

I was reminded repeatedly – when I had doubts about medication – that it was not magic. I would not get better after taking it for just a few days. It would take time, depending on one's condition. Recovery might take years.

Also, medications do not work alone. Lifestyle changes, a healthy diet, spiritual growth and friendships all play a part in speeding up and smoothening the recovery journey.

My Advice to Fellow Peers

- Have *yakin* (strong belief) that medication is a form of *penawar* (antidote).
- Be open with your doctor about any side effects. My doctor and I went through different mixes of medication for a year before we found one that worked beautifully for me. I also found other solutions through psychotherapy.
- Severe side effects only affect about 1 in 1000 people, so it is worth a try.
- Medication will lessen your symptoms. This will allow you to discover positive things about yourself to help you recover emotionally.
- It is ok if your doctor increases the dosage on occasion – it happens.

Natural Biological Healing:

Interview with Club HEAL's Health Coach, Delly Fareda

What is your role in Club HEAL?

As Health Coach, I recommend dietary plans, lead group exercises and explain safe exercises routines. I also encourage habits to potentially avoid chronic lifestyle-related diseases, and provide a support system to overcome health-related issues.

What are your hopes for Club HEAL and your clients?

I hope to motivate our clients to slowly make permanent changes towards a healthy lifestyle.

What would you like to say for the clients who attend your sessions in Club HEAL?

Thank you for gracing my sessions with your presence. I appreciate everyone's interest and participation. Let's continue to learn and grow together!

Delly's tips to maintain wellness naturally

Relaxation

- Daily: 15 mins ME-time – do things that make you happy.
- Daily: No distractions while eating.
- Weekly: 4 hours screen-free time – avoid your mobile phone and other gadgets. Instead, meditate, take a walk, or exercise!
- Practice gratitude.

Diet

- More fresh and unprocessed foods.
- Less sugar intake.
- No artificial sweeteners.
- Five different types of vegetables a day (for gut health and immune system).
- Proteins in your diet to feel full longer.
- Drink water (about 8 glasses).
- Don't juice your fruit or vegetable.

Movement

- Do a 30-minute walk/exercise daily, at home, gym, office or park:
 - Take 10,000 steps per day.
 - Take the stairs instead of the lift/escalator.
 - Go for a morning stroll.
 - Do strength training twice a week.
- Do not sit down for more than one hour at a time.

Sleep

- A good night's sleep leads to:
 - increased energy, and less stress,
 - improved concentration and memory,
 - improved immune system function, and reduced risk of developing chronic diseases,
 - increased life expectancy.
- Drink your caffeine before noon.
- Create a bedtime routine:
 - no e-devices 90 mins before bed,
 - practise deep breathing and light stretching, read a book or listen to relaxing music.
- Create an environment of absolute darkness for bedtime. It triggers melatonin production, which helps us sleep.





Snapshots of Past Events

1. Talk on women and mental health @ Supper Mummies Club – 4 Oct 2018

Dr Radiah had a lively discussion with 40 women @ Henderson-Dawson CC on how hormonal changes affect mental health.

2. Weekly radio talk show Tamu Sensasi @ Radio Warna with TG – 2-23 Oct; 13-27 Nov 2018

Club HEAL discussed mental health topics (art therapy, recovery, caregivers, drug addictions) with popular Mediacorp personality Zaza Majid.



3. Art exhibition, Landscapes of Our Mind @ Articulture (Esplanade Mall) – 5-10 Oct 2018



This inaugural art exhibition showcasing artwork produced by peers was graced by Ms Rahayu Mahzam. Activities included an art-jamming session delivered by Articulture's Ms Eve Teo and Club HEAL's Nhwafal, and a peer-sharing session.

4. Talk @ Silver Ribbon Singapore Global Summit – 5 Oct 2018

Dr Radiah spoke on the importance of respect in recovery and shared the journeys of four peers.



5. Forum on dementia @ Al-Istiqamah – 6 Oct 2018

Fauzy and Dr Radiah helped raise awareness to an enthusiastic group.

6. Panel discussion “Ketenangan dalam Kehidupan” (Malay) @ Wisma Geylang Serai – 7 Oct 2018

The event featuring panellists from AIC, IMH and Club HEAL was graced by Prof Fatimah Lateef.

7. Community Chest Awards @ Istana – 9 Oct 2018

Sarinah and Daryl were brilliant as emcees at this event.



8. World Mental Health Day (“WMHD”) @ BB Library – 10, 13, 20 Oct; 3 Nov 2018

Activities included an art exhibition (by Noor Baizura) and a discussion of our corporate video and latest book by Dr Radiah, Aneez, Yohanna and Daryl.

9. Talk @ Heeren – 12 Oct 2018

Hery Jamaludin gave an engaging talk on mental health symptoms and signs to 24 employees of Dow Chemical Pacific.

10. Adult Islamic Learning Knowledge Retreat “Why does Allah Allow Suffering” @ Suntec City – 13 Oct 2018

Hamidah Bahashwan spoke alongside Ustaz Fathurrahman Dawoed and Ustazah Nurul 'Izzah Khamsani. Her topic was “Between Ridha & Seeking Help: Correcting the Misconception”. The event attracted over 500 participants.

11. WMHD booth @ AMKFSC – 14 Oct 2018

The team of Kak Junn, Rishah and Salamah interacted with the public. Our Chinese version of *Shattered We HEAL* sold out!

12. SG Cares Community Network booth @ Bukit Batok – 18 Oct 2018

Kak Junn and Sarinah helped out at this event.

13. Counsellors' sharing @ North 5 School Cluster – 18 Oct 2018

Nurleen presented Club HEAL's services to 12 school counsellors during their yearly retreat.

14. Art exhibition “Castles in the Air” @ Ascent, Singapore Science Park – 19 Oct 2018

Co-organised by Club HEAL, Castles is a creative display of artwork by peers who went through a series of creative workshops by multidisciplinary artist anGe seah.

15. Book launch “You can be your best” @ NLB – 20 Oct 2018

Daryl sang at the launch. Hery donated all proceeds to Club HEAL.

16. Parenting talk @ Club HEAL PRE – 20 Oct 2018

Hamidah Bashawan gave useful parenting tips at this event.



17. Art exhibition @ EXPO - 25 Oct 2018

Our peers contributed to an exhibition at the annual Singapore Health and Biomedical Congress.

18. Empowerment camp @ CSC Changi – 26-28 Oct 2018



(Picture: Project Weave)

Clients and caregivers bonded through various activities organised by Project Weave at this annual event.

19. WMHD booth @ Kampung Admiralty – 27 Oct 2018

Our CREST team were out in full force reaching out to residents.

20. WMHD event “Healthy Minds, Happy Lives – Resilience Across the Ages” @ BBE – 28 Oct 2018

The Club HEAL team presented a 'library' with four human 'books' for residents.

21. Interactive forum @ YODA – 3, 4 Nov 2018

The forum featured a panel discussion following a play about a family affected by mental health issues put up by Youths of Darul Arqam.

22. ARS learning journey @ Club HEAL PRE – 9, 20 Nov 2018

Hamidah's team educated religious teachers from PERGAS on Club HEAL's work.

23. Booth @ Pasir Ris FSC – 10 Nov 2018

The team of Rishah and ShaSha reached out to the public at Elias CC.

24. BBE Seniors' Week booth @ Club HEAL BBE – 10 Nov 2018

Many seniors came forward to enquire and understand our services and were encouraged to follow up with us. There was also genuine interest in our books.

25. HFT @ Club HEAL PRE – 10 Nov 2018

As usual, Club HEAL captured the interest of potential volunteers at the Healing Friends' Training.

26. Motivational talk @ Al-Amin Mosque – 11 Nov 2018

Noraliza shared tips on managing stress in studies and family relationships with aLIVE students.

27. Silver Ribbon's Wellness Carnival booth @ Sembawang – 24 Nov 2018

The CREST team reached out to residents at this event.

28. Mental Health Carnival booth @ PNC Punggol – 25 Nov 2018

Rishah and ShaSha manned a booth and enjoyed a laughter yoga session.



Upcoming Events & Announcements

Upcoming Events

1. Our Healing Voice graduation ceremony @ NLB – 5 Jan 2019
2. HEALing Friends Training @ Club HEAL PRE – 12 Jan 2019
3. Singapore Mental Health Conference @ Max Atria – 30, 31 Jan 2019
4. Workshop for students @ NLB – Program Emas: Kesihatan Mental – 31 Jan 2019
5. Talk @ Al-Mawaddah – 9 Feb 2019
6. Booth @ NTU Mental Health week – 18,19 Feb 2019
7. Dementia talk @ En-Naeem – 23 Feb 2019

Announcement!

We have a new programme – **A HEALING SPACE** – to help women with addiction issues. Call 68993463 or email info@clubheal.org.sg for further information, and our Addictions Counselor, Ms Mazirah, will be in touch.

GTPs @ Club HEAL

Club HEAL's three centres are now designated GTP's (Go-To-Points) for lost PWDs (Persons with Dementia).



Creative Corner

Change

by ShaSha

From the top of my hijab,
To the soles of my shoes,
I walk this long road,
Feeling empty and alone,

As I move to the sounds,
Of the people I can't see,
Hatred is an understatement,
They are trouble indeed,

I swallow the pain,
Hope that I'll be sane again.

I sit in the bus with my mother,
But it's more like she's my confidante.

Now I still walk this road,
But I'm no longer alone,
I look to my left and my right,
And I walk with pride.

The most beautiful people I have ever met,
Those who I can't stay mad at,
My lovely family I ♥ them all,
And Nothing will ever change that.



Devita



A HEALing Friend

"You see, the Mu'min in their mutual piety, love and affection, are like a (single) body. When a part (of it) has a complaint, the whole body is united with it in wakefulness and fever." – (Bukhari and Muslim).

As a member or a volunteer, you can contribute in a variety of ways, from assisting in Club HEAL events to conducting rehabilitative activities! We need people from all walks of life who can contribute their time and skills to fulfil our cause. To become a member, please fill up the membership form available at our website (under Resources section) and email it to us at info@clubheal.org.sg or mail it to:

Club HEAL, Blk 244, Bukit Batok East Ave 5, #01-02, Singapore 650244.
We look forward to hearing from you!



Donations & Sponsorships

As Club HEAL is an Institution of a Public Character (IPC), all donors will be eligible for 2.5 times tax reduction. Donations can be made by cheque to 'Club HEAL' or by GIRO at: www.clubheal.org.sg/donate. Please contact us at 68993463 for further details or email us at admin@clubheal.org.sg.

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