

MEDICINE: PROS AND CONS



About the Speaker

Mr. Ganeshan is a senior pharmaceutical industry leader serving as Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer at Micro Labs. With extensive experience in medical and pharmaceutical systems, he brings a practical and scientific perspective to the use of medications in mental health care, including drug mechanisms, dosage principles, monitoring, and public awareness.

Seminar Overview

The seminar explored the role of psychiatric medication in mental health treatment, presenting a balanced view of its benefits and limitations. Mr. Ganeshan examined how medicines work in the brain, how treatment decisions are made, why dosage and monitoring matter, and how stigma often interferes with proper care.

The session combined historical context, neurobiological foundations, classification of common psychiatric disorders, and modern pharmacological approaches. Emphasis was placed on rational, individualized treatment and the need to replace fear and stigma with informed understanding.

Historical Evolution of Psychiatric Treatment

The presentation began with a historical overview of how mental illness has been understood and treated across time. In earlier periods, lack of scientific understanding led to cruel and isolating practices toward people with mental illness. Many

conditions were attributed to supernatural causes rather than biological or psychological factors.

Early pioneers helped shift this perspective. Classical medical thinkers proposed that mental illness could arise from natural causes. Later reformers advocated humane treatment and moral care, laying foundations for modern psychiatry. Interpersonal and relational models further expanded understanding of how social environments influence mental health.

With the growth of medical science, structured training programs, and supportive legislation, psychiatry evolved into a formal medical specialty with evidence-based treatment approaches.

Understanding Mental Health

Mental health was defined as a state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being that influences thinking, feeling, behaviour, decision-making, and relationships. It is essential for effective daily functioning and is increasingly recognized as a basic human right.

Good mental health enables individuals to manage stress, learn effectively, maintain relationships, and contribute productively to society. Poor mental health, when untreated, can significantly reduce quality of life and functional capacity.

Common Psychiatric Disorders Discussed

The seminar reviewed major categories of psychiatric disorders commonly encountered in clinical practice.

Anxiety disorders involve excessive and persistent worry often accompanied by physical symptoms such as restlessness and increased heart rate. Depressive disorders are marked by prolonged sadness, loss of interest, and functional impairment, sometimes with suicidal risk. Bipolar disorders involve alternating episodes of depression and elevated or manic states requiring careful long-term management.

Trauma-related disorders develop after severe stress exposure and include intrusive memories and hyperarousal. Psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia involve disturbances in perception and thinking, including hallucinations and delusions. Obsessive-compulsive disorder features intrusive thoughts and repetitive behaviours. Eating disorders and substance use disorders require multidisciplinary treatment approaches. Modern behavioural conditions such as technology-related anxiety were also noted as emerging concerns.

Neurotransmitters and Brain Chemistry

A central scientific theme of the seminar was the role of neurotransmitters in mental illness and treatment. Brain chemicals such as serotonin, dopamine, norepinephrine, glutamate, and acetylcholine regulate mood, motivation, cognition, and perception.

Imbalances or dysregulation in these systems are associated with different psychiatric conditions. Psychiatric medications act by modifying these neurotransmitter pathways to restore functional balance and reduce symptoms. Understanding this biological basis helps demystify medication and reduces fear associated with psychiatric drug use.

How Psychiatric Medicines Work

Psychiatric medications are designed to act on specific neural pathways rather than producing generalized sedation. Different drug classes target

different symptom clusters. Antidepressants regulate mood-related transmitters. Antipsychotics modulate dopamine pathways involved in psychosis. Mood stabilizers regulate neural excitability. Anti-anxiety agents reduce excessive arousal.

The speaker emphasized that medication effects are not instant and often require sustained, monitored use. Response varies between individuals, and treatment must be adjusted based on clinical progress and tolerability.

Individualized Treatment and Dosage Principles

A key message was that psychiatric treatment is not uniform. Medication choice and dosage depend on multiple individual factors, including age, body weight, metabolism, coexisting medical conditions, symptom severity, and prior response history.

Regular follow-up and monitoring are essential to balance effectiveness and side effects. Dose adjustments are common and expected. The objective is always to achieve maximum benefit with minimum adverse effects. Ongoing supervision allows clinicians to refine treatment safely.

Benefits of Medication in Mental Health Care

The advantages of psychiatric medication include symptom reduction, relapse prevention, improved daily functioning, and increased capacity to engage in psychotherapy and rehabilitation. Effective medication can restore sleep, stabilize mood, reduce psychosis, control anxiety, and enable social and occupational participation.

At a societal level, treated mental illness improves productivity, relationship stability, and community functioning. Medication therefore has both personal and public health value.

Limitations and Concerns

The seminar also addressed limitations and concerns associated with psychiatric medication. Not all patients respond equally. Side effects may occur and require management. Some conditions require long-term maintenance treatment, which patients may find psychologically difficult.

Research investment in new psychiatric drugs remains lower compared to other medical specialties, slowing innovation. Misconceptions and stigma lead many individuals to avoid or discontinue treatment prematurely. Overgeneralized fears such as becoming emotionally numb or dependent often arise from misinformation rather than clinical reality.

Medication alone is not sufficient for many conditions and works best when combined with psychotherapy, lifestyle regulation, and social support.

Branches and Specializations in Psychiatry

Modern psychiatry includes multiple subspecialties addressing different populations and needs. These include child and adolescent psychiatry, addiction psychiatry, geriatric psychiatry, forensic psychiatry, neuropsychiatry, community psychiatry, rehabilitation psychiatry, psychotherapy, and sexual psychiatry. This diversification reflects the complexity of mental health care and the need for specialized approaches.

Stigma and the Need for Awareness

A recurring theme was the stigma surrounding psychiatric medication and mental illness. Fear,

misinformation, and social judgment discourage help-seeking and adherence. The speaker emphasized that psychiatric disorders are medical conditions with biological components and should be treated with the same legitimacy as physical illnesses.

Public education, open discussion, and scientific literacy are essential to reduce stigma and promote early treatment.

Conclusion

The seminar presented a balanced, science-based perspective on psychiatric medication, outlining both its strengths and its limitations. Medicines play a crucial role in stabilizing brain chemistry, reducing symptoms, and enabling recovery, but they require individualized selection, careful monitoring, and integration with psychological and social interventions.

Greater awareness, reduced stigma, and continued research investment are necessary to improve mental health outcomes. Rational, informed use of medication rather than fear-based avoidance supports both individual recovery and societal well-being.

Prepared by:

Suryansh Singh Bhadouria

Designed by:

Tanishka Waikar

Intern at Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health
Student of Symbiosis Institute of Health Sciences,
Pune.