Skull Drills to Happy Pills

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English 101
What is mental illness?

- Mental illness refers to a wide range of conditions that affect a person's thinking, feeling, behavior, or mood. These conditions can significantly impact an individual's daily functioning, relationships, and overall well-being. Mental illnesses are characterized by disturbances in thoughts, emotions, perceptions, or behaviors that result in distress or impaired functioning.
3 Ancient Mental Illness Theories

• Supernatural: mental illness is due to external or spiritual forces such as the devil, evil spirits, witches, or curses.

• Somatogenic: mental illnesses have physiological or biological bases. I.e. brain structure, genetic inheritance, or chemical imbalances

• Psychogenic: emphasizes the role of thoughts, emotions, early-life experiences in the development of mental illnesses.

• These theories are not mutually exclusive, but modern-day mental health models integrate elements from the somatogenic and psychogenic theories.

• For example, the biopsychosocial approach recognizes the interplay between biological, psychological, and social experiences in the understanding of mental illnesses and treatments.
**MIDDLE AGES**

- During this era, all held a rather supernatural perspective of abnormal behavior.

- They believed mental illness was caused by deities whether it was as a punishment or spiritual takeover.

- As a result, they turned to religious or cultural treatments such as exorcisms and trephination.

- Exorcism: religious practice aimed at expelling malevolent entities, spirits, or demons believed to have taken possession of a person. The practice often included prayers, sacred texts, or symbolic actions by a priest or other spiritual leader.

- Trephination: surgical practice that drilled a hole into the skull of a human with the purpose of alleviating symptoms of mental illness or releasing evil spirit.

*The Cure of Folly - Bosch*
Europe (13th–18th century)

• 1247: Bethlehem Hospital AKA Bedlam in London was the 1st organized effort to help the mentally ill. Bedlam was an asylum, meaning "place of safety," which is ironic because it was more like a prison. "Treatments" were inhumane to say the least. They consisted of beatings, ice baths until death or seizures, induced vomiting, and bloodletting— with the purpose of removing physical impurities to improve their mental conditions. It was believed that mental illness was a disease of the body rather than the brain.

• Those considered insane increasingly received maltreatment, often kept in dungeons—isolated from society.

• This was until the concern over the mentally ill had become so great that educated figures began to get involved.

• 1793: French physician Phillipe Pinel was appointed chief physician at the Bicetre Hospital in Paris, where he implemented groundbreaking reforms. Under his supervision, chains and shackles were removed and public visits were banned to protect patients from embarrassment. Pinel's work paved the way for the moral movement, emphasizing the importance of empathy and understanding in the treatment of the mentally ill. His legacy continues to influence mental health advocacy and care to this day.
Late 18th century–19th century: Moral Movement in the United States

- Individuals with mental illnesses received treatment at home or were secluded from their families at public almshouses, receiving little to no treatment unless they came from a wealthy family to be treated at a public hospital.

- This was the case for many until the 19th century introduced the idea of "moral treatment." Moral treatment promised a cure for the mentally ill in asylums, emphasizing humane treatment and moral guidance over punitive and harsh methods. Asylums focused on providing a secluded, peaceful environment.

- In 1813, Philadelphia Quakers founded the "Friends Hospital," the first institution built on moral treatment.
Key Figures of Moral Treatment Movement

• Dorothea Dix: In 1841, Dix volunteered at a Sunday school in a Cambridge jail where she observed mentally ill patients in very poor conditions and became determined to improve their treatments in asylums. From that moment on, she began to travel across America to advocate for humane treatment of the mentally ill. 2 years later, she wrote "Memorial to the Massachusetts Legislature." In this memorial, she shed light on the cruel treatment and neglect prevalent in mental institutions; advocating for legislative reforms, increased funding for the establishments, and improvement of mental hospitals. "But truth is the highest consideration. I tell what I have seen—painful and shocking as the details often are—that from them you may feel more deeply the imperative obligation which lies upon you to prevent the possibility of a repetition or continuance of such outrages upon humanity..." (Dix 1843)

• Benjamin Rush: A founding father, also known as "The Father of American psychiatry," Rush challenged the spiritual/demonic explanation of mental illness and believed that blood flow was the source of insanity. As a result, he turned to bloodletting, alternating cold and hot baths, and the invention of the "tranquilizing chair." The purpose of the chair was to control the blood flow to the brain, reducing the force and frequency of the pulse. While his methods did little to nothing to cure the patients, he laid the foundation for a more compassionate and medicalized approach to mental health treatment.

• Despite the efforts of the moral movement, asylums eventually failed because of overcrowding, abuse of power by staff, underfunding, and inhumane conditions. Treatments remained harsh as mental illness was widely misunderstood and professionals did not have any evidence of the causes, thus many resorted to their beliefs of the illness and cure.
20th Century: Major Turning Point

- Early 1900s: Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories emerged, influencing psychological approaches to mental illness. Freud proposed that unconscious forces and childhood experiences effect our behavioral and mental processes.

- 1930s: Medical advancements brought forward new treatments such as electro-convulsive therapy, hydrotherapy, and insulin coma therapy.

- 1950s: Introduction of psychotropic medications that revolutionized psychiatric treatment. Chlorpromazine (Thorazine) was discovered in France by Henri Laborit to reduce surgical shock in his patients. Its effects were stunning, the drug was able to relax his patients without fully sedating them. The drug made its way into the United States and by 1954, it was approved by the FDA to be used as an anti-psychotic. Prior to Thorazine, barbiturates and bromides were used to sedate patients, resulting in addiction or other health issues.

- 1960s: Deinstitutionalization involved the relocation of severely mentally ill individuals out of the asylums and closing portions or the entirety of these large institutions. The advent of Thorazine allowed individuals to live more successfully and independently. However, it was also a contributor to the mental health crisis as many individuals with mental disorders became homeless due to inadequate housing and lack of medical care.

- 1970s-1980s: Rise of Cognitive Behavioral Therapies which focused on the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in daily life. The goal of CBT is to help individuals identify their thinking patterns, emotions, and behaviors that contribute to emotional distress or problems in life. This structured, more logical approach was a step toward cognitive-behavior principles in mental health care.
Works Cited


• “Memorial to the Massachusetts Legislature (1843) Dorothea Dix.” *Memorial to the Massachusetts Legislature (1843)*, usa.usembassy.de/etexts/democrac/15.htm.