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Bibliotherapy: The Least Cost Effective Strategy for the Treatment Of Selected Health Problems.

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ABSTRACT

Bibliotherapy has been found by book Makers and library professionals as one of the practical means of solving some health challenges. This paper is an exposition of the adoption of reading in the treatment of some human health challenges. The paper treated depression as a type of health challenge which bibliotherapy can be used to cure. It highlighted the causes of depression and its effects, types of information resources that can be read to cure depression, benefits of reading generally and where to obtain books for reading. The paper recommends that medical doctors and other health workers should recommend reading of books to patients of depression as a practical means of curing them

Keywords: Bibliotherapy, Health problems, librarians, Public libraries, health workers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading books particularly fiction has proved to be a source of healing to some types of ailments. People who read fiction (imaginary stories) scientists attest do not suffer from certain types illness. The use of reading to cure, illness, is called bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy according to Lindman and Kling (1968) is defined as an interaction between the reader and certain literature which is useful in adding personal adjustment. Such health problems the author continued include depression, mental health issues, retarded children etc. Bibliotherapy is also

seen as the use of books and other ready materials as an enhancing adjunct to therapy. Other scholars also see bibliotherapy as the use of literature to help heal.

When people experience unusual or unexpected happenings in their lives, they indulge to grief. Grief is a complex and dynamic process influencing individuals of ages. Grief and loss of a relative to death and non-death related incidents often cause significant stress, psychological trauma and emotional distress, including depression or anxiety (Briggs & Dale-Elizabeth, 2008). As one grieves, there arises depreciation both physical and spiritual in the life of the person. The person tends to exhibit unusual life style which could be noticed by a close observer. In some cases, if the person is not noticed early and leading to the arrest of the ailment arrested, it may affect the thinking faculty of the individual, which can lead to mental illness. However, when the individual is introduced to reading, the health of the individual will be restored.

The use of reading in the treatment of certain health issues is as old as man as library. It was used in the ancient Egypt and no wonder King Rameses II of Egypt who is known worldwide as the builder of the oldest Library wrote at the entrance of his library building "**the house of healing for the soul**" According to Lutz (1978), Galen the extraordinary Philosopher and physician to Marcus Aurelius of Rome maintained a medical library in the first century AD not for himself and staff, but also for his patients. During the World War 1, the Library war service stationed librarians in military hospitals where they dispersed books to patients. This is because the soldier doctors know that reading could help the war victims to recover from their illnesses.

2. TYPES OF HEALTH CHALLENGES WHICH BIBLIOTHERAPY CAN BE USED TO TREAT (CURE)

In this study, the lecturer has chosen to limit the use of bibliotherapy to the treatment of depression. This choice was made because depression is a common illness that affects everyone at one time or the other. Beside, the centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recorded that 7.6% of people over the age of 12 have depression in any two-week period. Again, the World Health Organization (WHO) states that depression is the most common illness worldwide and the leading cause of disability. Records also showed that about 350 million people all over the world are affected by depression.

2.1 What is Depression?

Depression simply means feeling of severe despondency and dejection. Depression also means melancholy, misery, sadness, unhappiness, sorrow, woe, and gloom. Dejection as concept means downheartedness, while despondency means, low spirits, heavy heartedness, discouragements, despair, desolation and hopelessness. According to MacGill (2017) the symptoms of depression include; sadness, feeling down, having loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities. Another scholar elsewhere also states that the symptoms of depression include:

- Depressed mood;
- Reduced interest or pleasure in activities, previously enjoyed;
- Loss of sexual desire;
- Unintentional weight loss (without dieting). Or low appetite;
- Insomnia (difficulty sleeping);
- Hypersomnia (Excessive sleeping);
- Psychomotor agitation (restlessness, pacing up and down);
- Delayed psychomotor skills (slow movement and slow speech);
- Fatigue or loss of energy;
- Feeling of worthlessness or guilt;

- Impaired ability to think, concentrate or make decisions; and
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide or attempt at suicide.

2.2 Causes of Depression

Depression could be caused by the following factors, namely:

- Genetic
- Biological changes in neurotransmitter levels
- Environmental factors
- Psychological and social (psychosocial) factors.

However, for the purpose of this lecture, the lecturer will not go into details in treating all the above mentioned causes of depression. This paper will review the causes of depression under the psychosocial factors. That is the psychosocial factors.

They include:

1. Life events such as bereavement, divorce, work issues relationship with friends, family, financial problems medical concern or acute stress.
2. Personality (those with less successful coping strategies or previously life trauma).
3. child hood trauma (may be the person witness the killing of a loved one or relative by assailants)
4. Abuse of recreational drugs like alcohol, amphetamines and other strong drugs that are linked to depression.
5. Past head injury
6. Chronic pain syndrome (such as chronic health conditions as diabetes, obstructive pulmonary disease and cardiovascular disease)

3. USING READING TO CURE DEPRESSION

This is usually one million and one question often asked by people. Is it possible to use ordinary reading of books frictions to cure an ailment as serious as depression? A study conducted by Naylor, Litt, Antonuccio and Johnson (2010) showed where some group of people who were depressed were brought together, some were administered with drugs while others were given books titled "FEELING GOOD" by D.D Burns. The study revealed that those who read the book "Felling Good" recovered faster than those that were administered with drugs; Eveleth (2013) also wrote that we read to know that we are not alone. The author further stated that sentiments of reading to connect with the world and to feel less isolated may be more than just a poetic thought. Price (2018) also stated that if your primary care physician diagnoses you with mild or moderate depression, one of her options (in fact the best option) is now to scribble a title on a prescription pad. You take the torn-off sheet not to the pharmacy or dispensary, but to your local library, where it can be exchange for a copy of "overcoming depression".

3.1 Types of Information Resources Needed to Treat Depression.

There are different types of books that can be used in order to treat depression. It is recommended that fiction books, that is imaginary stories be read by anyone who is suffering from depression. Again, the Holy books particularly the Bible and the Koran which are regarded as books of knowledge be read very often by people who are depressed. Reading books not only frees your mind from thinking deeply about your present situation, but also helps you to acquire new knowledge. According to unknown author, reading fiction not only develops our imagination and creativity, it gives us the skills to be alone. It gives us the ability to feel empathy for people we

have never met, living lives we couldn't possibly experience for ourselves because the book puts inside the character's skin. Again, reading as postulated by scientists puts our brains into a pleasurable trance-like state similar to meditation, and it brings the same health benefits or deep relaxation and inner calm. Regular readers sleep better; have lower stress levels, higher self-esteem and low rates of depression than non-reader.

Scientists have proved that reading as low as 6minutes can reduce our stress by 60%. Again it has also been proved that reading reduces stress by 68% than listening to music, 100% than drinking a cup of tea, 300% than going for a walk and 600% than playing a video game.

3.2 Benefits Of Reading

The benefits of reading to people include:

1. Empathy (feeling for other)
2. Disengagement from stress
3. Makes one to sleep better
4. Helps one to have improved relationship that books are a reality simulator
5. Have less mental decline in later life
6. Reading your mind
7. It helps you to build your vocabulary
8. It helps you to be creativity
9. It makes you more happier

3.3 Where Do You Find Books To Read?

This is a very important question considering the fact that the economy is no longer friendly with us. The public library is the right place to get fiction books to read. A public library according to Edom (2012) is the tax supported library that serves the generality of the people without bias to gender, race, social status, academic qualification, religious, affiliation, etc. free of charge. We can also take our children to the public library particularly during holidays so that they can imbibe the culture of reading which they take to their adult age. This is the right place to go for recreation and not cinema houses or any of the exotic hotels around. Reading is better than watching Hollywood or Nolly-wood.

4. CONCLUSION

Reading can be used as a means of curing some psychological ailments like depression. People should develop the habit of reading as a means of enjoying their leisure time. It is believed that when people read, they tend to forget their worries as well as learn new things in life. Doctors and other health professionals should as a means of curing depression recommend religious or secular books to people suffering from depression.

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