

More than 4% of UAE population clinically depressed

Rate of clinical depression in the UAE is in line with global figures



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Dubai: In the UAE, the rate of mental illnesses such as depression has doubled in the last decade, *Gulf News* has learnt.

The increase mirrors statistics in developing countries, said senior health spokespeople who met yesterday to discuss methods to push mental health to the core of health care planning.

UAE figures suggest that four to five per cent of the population suffer from clinical depression.

According to the World Health Organisation, depression affects more than 350 million people of all ages worldwide, and by 2020, it will be the second leading cause of disability throughout the world after cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Currently depression is ranked fourth among the 10 leading causes of the Global Burden of Disease, a comprehensive regional and global assessment of mortality and disability from 107 diseases and injuries.

Speaking at the inaugural two-day GCC conference on the Role of Pharmacists in Mental Health, Dr Ameen Hussain Al Amiri, assistant undersecretary for Medical Practices and Licensing at the Ministry of Health, highlighted the importance of early diagnosis in the treatment of mental disorders and diseases, and the challenges in the treatment of mental disorders.

^c Dr Talaat Mattar, consultant psychiatrist at the Ministry and conference speaker, also spoke about how other branches

of medicine are given priority by stakeholders and decision makers in the Gulf region, but mental health is pushed down the priority list.

He told *Gulf News* that mental illnesses, especially clinical depression cases, were on the rise.