

Mental illness and Ramadan!

What we need to know and what we need to do?

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Background

- During the month-long observance of Ramadan, many muslims across the world fast from sunrise to sundown.
- While there is a robust body of research on the effect of fasting on medical illnesses such as diabetes, there is little research addressing the topic of mental health issues during Ramadan
- It is important for clinicians to understand the effects of fasting on patients with mental illness and also how to arrange their medications during the holy month of Ramadan.
- There are certain psychiatric illnesses wherein people are very sensitive to sleep disruption. Bipolar disorder is the main illness that is affected by sleep disturbances, where evidence suggests decreased sleep or interruptions can put people at risk of relapse or worsening symptoms.
- Clinicians need to be aware of this issue and to discuss it in details with their patients before the Ramadan to weight the risks and benefits.

Objectives

- The aim was to make a partnership between patients with mental illness and their healthcare professionals in Mental Health Services (MHS) to plan for their medications and management during fasting in the holy month of Ramadan.

Methodology

- An awareness day in preparation for the Holy month of Ramadan was organized by pharmacy department at MHS .
- The event was carried-out for 2 days at the Main entrance OPD hall on 28th April and 1st May 2019 respectively and in RCC2 on 1st May 2019.
- Patients, their families, care givers and healthcare professionals were invited to participate.
- Registration and activities were in place to determine the total number of participants.
- The use of particular psychotropic medications during Ramadan and the proper modifications or special precautions on the use of medicines while fasting were explained (Figure1).

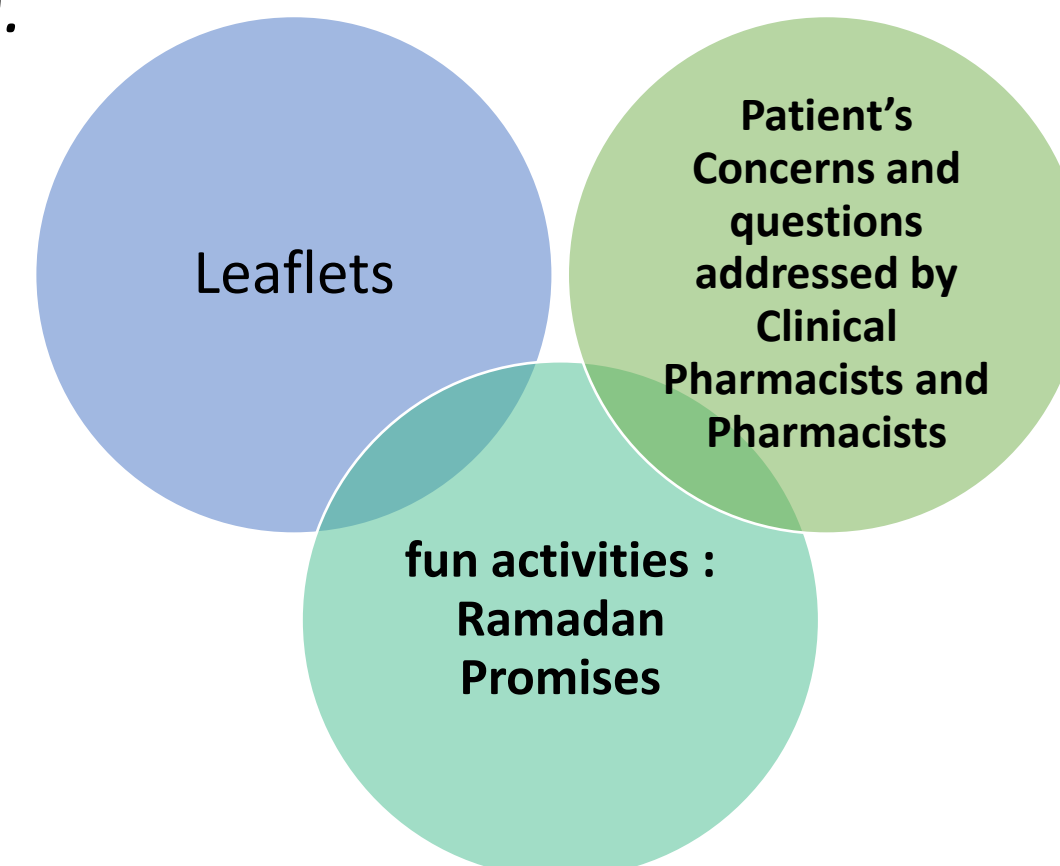


Figure 1: Materials and Resources

Results

- A total of 150 people participated in different areas.
- 103 visitors took time in answering survey, writing in the Ramadan promise boards and joining Q&A.
- Most of the participants had concerns about sedation caused by their medications as they don't want to miss the evening prayer (Taraweeh) or the evening meal (Sohor).
- Pharmacists also were able to discuss some of the misconceptions that patients can stop their medications during Ramadan and depend on the spiritual effect of fasting. The importance of adhering to medications was discussed and that the combination between the biological and spiritual effects has much better clinical outcomes.
- The participants valued the safety measures that were discussed in the leaflets regarding avoiding dehydration and importance of balance the fluid intake especially for patients on Lithium treatment and also other medications that might affect the blood pressure of the patients.
- The level of participation was impressive.
- The overall rating about the organization, provided information and expectation from the event reached 98.75 %.
- Figure 2 illustrates some pictures.
- Figure 3 demonstrates some quotes from participants.



Figure 2: Engagement of HCPs, patients and caregivers during the event

"...I would like to have it in malls where more people will come..."

"Great event, like to see more of this interactive sessions from pharmacy!"

"...I Got very good information regarding Ramadan! Excellent event..."

Figure 3: Quotes from participants

Conclusions

- It is important to conduct more research about the management of mental illness and the use of medication while fasting the Holy month of Ramadan.
- Engaging patients and healthcare professionals together in partnership is helpful to understand and deal with issues related to patients' management.
- Awareness events that involve patients and families are helpful in building positive relationship with the healthcare professionals that might lead to positive clinical outcomes.
- Patients and families would like to see more frequent events that engage patients with their healthcare professionals.

In Collaboration with



Conflict of interest: Nothing to declare.
This work has been made possible by the pharmacy department at MHS.

Acknowledgment: we would like to acknowledge all MH pharmacy team for their efforts and contribution to this event