Depression in Women Migrants Living in Slums in North India

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We have read the above-mentioned article with great interest.¹ Mental health problems have been on an upward incline globally. Among all mental health issues, depression is affecting the largest proportion of the population. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 264 million people around the world experience depression. Annually, over 800,000 people commit suicide due to sequelae of depression. Between 76% and 85% of people with depression live in low- and middle-income countries.² Poor and women living either in developed or developing nations bear the greatest burden of depression.³ The outbreak of COVID-19 has created fear and panic around the world. The public health measures taken in India to contain the virus from the further spread in the population have adversely affected the poorest people the most and widened disparities.⁴ Thus, this study¹ captured estimates when the population had adjusted to the circumstances. The anxiety levels understandably reduce with more information about any calamity, which in this case was the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, increased social cohesion that people started building around them, and the reduced rate of seasonal depression, may have contributed to lower estimates. In relation to the national estimates of depression,³ this study indicates that women of migrant families living in slum areas are having a disproportionately higher burden of depression in India. Hence, further research is needed to identify the causes of higher rates of depression, and strategic public health interventions need to be planned to address the concern. Such public health measures should include both educational interventions and policy-level supports.

Conflict of Interest
None declared.

References

2 World Health Organization (WHO). Depression. Accessed November 27, 2020 at:  https://www.who.int/health-topics/depression#tab=tab_1
4 Mukherjee S. Disparities, desperation, and divisiveness: coping with COVID-19 in India. Psychol Trauma 2020;12(6):582–584