Globalisation and its Effects on Asian-Pacific Nations

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The Asia-Pacific region is home to more than a half of the world's population and is an area of enormous diversity and rapid change, as well as of massive inequalities and contrasts. Demographic shifts have involved major changes in family structure and functioning which has implications for mental wellbeing and for caring for family members with problems. Increased population mobility also may be associated with increased isolation while rapid urbanisation may also be associated with a range of psychiatric issues. Ageing of the population is occurring at a more rapid rate than in the West and it is experiencing an unprecedented growth of its youth population. The latter are better educated than previous generations but in many cases are experiencing unfulfilled expectations, un- and under-employment, exposure to drugs and other risk situations. Structural change in the economy is seeing a decline in agricultural employment, rapid transitions from subsistence to commercial employment, new pressures in the labour market and increased female workforce participation. Moreover, the Asian crisis of the late 1990s had a devastating impact on many. Poverty remains a massive problem and is highly concentrated among particular groups and areas. This has seen the erosion of many traditional safety nets. Changes in the family from an extended to a nuclear orientation may be impinging upon mental health in the region. Reduced patriarchal control, changes in women’s role and status, the breakdown of the family or the unit of production and changes in intergenerational relationships may have had an impact. The impact of Western-based education systems has been profound as has the huge effects of mass media with more than half of Asians having access to television sets. The limited resources of most Asian countries means that the expenditure on health, and especially mental health, is extremely low.