



Indian Journal of Psychiatry

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE INDIAN PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY

ISSN 0019-5545

Volume 61, Number 1

January-February 2019

**Now indexed
with PubMed
&
Covered in
Journal Citation
Reports (JCR)**

EDITORIAL

Use of digital media in suicide prevention in adolescents and young adults

Om Prakash Singh

REVIEW ARTICLES

Situating adult attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder in the externalizing spectrum: Etiological, diagnostic, and treatment considerations

Jayant Mahadevan, Arun Kandasamy, Vivek Benegal

Indian guidelines on neurosurgical interventions in psychiatric disorders

Paresh K. Doshi, Shyam S. Arumugham, Ajit Bhide, Sandeep Vaishya, Amit Desai, Om Prakash Singh, Suresh B. Math, Shiv Gautam, T. S. Satyanarayana Rao, E. Mohandas, Dwarkanath Srinivas, Ajit Avasthi, Sandeep Grover, Y. C. Janardhan Reddy

ORIGINAL ARTICLES

Identification of factors affecting treatment outcome in bipolar disorder

Lavanya Vedanarayanan, Ravindra Munoli, Girish Thunga, Sreedharan Nair, Pooja Poojari, Vijayanarayana Kunhikatta

A model for digital mental healthcare: Its usefulness and potential for service delivery in low- and middle-income countries

Savita Malhotra, Subho Chakrabarti, Ruchita Shah

Parental care-seeking pathway and challenges for autistic spectrum disorders children: A mixed method study from Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Pranab Mahapatra, Sanghamitra Pati, Rajeshwari Sinha, Abhimanyu Singn Chauhan, Rakesh Ranjan Nanda, Srinivas Nallala

Are emotion recognition deficits in patients with schizophrenia states or traits? A 6-month follow-up study

Sakir Gica, Burc Cagri Poyraz, Huseyin Gulec

Factors responsible for delay in treatment seeking in patients with psychosis: A qualitative study

Mithun Dutta, Mamidipalli Sai Spoorthy, Shrimaan Patel, Nitish Agarwala

Comparative efficacy of baclofen and lorazepam in the treatment of alcohol withdrawal syndrome

Prannay Gulati, Bir Singh Chavan, Ajeet Sidana

Awareness and attitude toward pictographs on tobacco products: A population-based study in field practice area

Suresh Chand Yaddanapalli, Srinivas Ravoori, Vikram Simha Bommireddy, Srinivas Pachava

Serum S100B levels in patients with depression

Parul Arora, Rajesh Sagar, Manju Mehta, Pooja Pallavi, Subhadra Sharma, Asok Kumar Mukhopadhyay

Impact of nomophobia: A nondrug addiction among students of physiotherapy course using an online cross-sectional survey

Sohel Ahmed, Nikita Pokhrel, Swastik Roy, Asir John Samuel

New initiatives: A psychiatric inpatient facility for older adolescents in India

Arun Singh Yadav, Rajendra Kiragasur Madegowda, Eesha Sharma, Preeti Jacob, Kommu John Vijaysagar, Satish Chandra Girimaji, Shekhar P. Seshadri, Shoba Srinath

BRIEF RESEARCH COMMUNICATION

A study on the prevalence and correlates of nicotine dependence among adolescents of Burdwan Town, West Bengal

Kamirul Islam, Asok Kumar Datta, Soutrik Seth, Atanu Roy, Rajib Das

CASE REPORTS

Leukocytoclastic vasculitis secondary to clozapine

Shatavisa Mukherjee, Nikhil Era, Mala Mukherjee, Santanu Kumar Tripathi

A queer case of Parry-Romberg syndrome with coexisting psychiatric ailment

Narvir Singh Chauhan, Sukjit Singh

LETTERS TO EDITOR

Post dengue mania: A case series

Lidia T. Krishnan, Vanathi Subramoniam, Firoz Kazhungil, Harish Musaliarveetil Tharayil

Eyelid petechiae as a window to relapse in a case of purging-type anorexia nervosa

Mahima Agrawal, Pravesh Yadav, Roopam Kumari, Ram Chander

Psychiatric pioneers in Yoga therapy

Somasundaram Ottilingam, Tejus Murthy

Number of psychiatrists in India: Baby steps forward, but a long way to go

Kabir Garg, C Naveen Kumar, Prabha S Chandra

The depressed boy who accepted "Blue Whale Challenge"

Rajvardhan Narayan, Bornali Das, Shyamanta Das, Samrat Singh Bhandari

An adolescent crush or delusion of erotomania? Dissecting the normal from the pathological

Biswa Ranjan Mishra, Sudipta Das, Santanu Nath

OBITUARY

Professor Narendra Nath Wig MD FRCPsych DPM.(Lond) 1930-2018

Prof. Raghunandan Gaind

Professor Adarsh Singh Mahal MBBS, DO, DPM, MD (16.06.1919- 18.05.2018)

Rakesh K. Chadda

Professor Dharendra Nath Nandy DPM.MRCP (Edinburgh) PHD (Psychology) FNAMS 1918-2017

Prof. Uday Chaudhury

NOTICE OF RETRACTION

Retraction: The princess of polka dots: Using art as a medium to cope with hallucinations



Online at
www.indianjpsychiatry.org

Medknow

Wolters Kluwer

The depressed boy who accepted “Blue Whale Challenge”

Sir,

The “Blue Whale Challenge” has received a lot of media attention in India and rest of the world, but it was considered a hype as there was lack of any mention in the medical literature until Balhara *et. al.*^[1] reported the first case where they mentioned about an adolescent boy who after downloading an application in his mobile started playing the game. This game was named by its creator, a Russian psychologist, who thought that a person with “no value” should commit suicide as does the whale which “strands” itself. When an individual or a group of marine mammals are washed ashore or in shallow water and cannot return itself, it is known as “stranding” which is believed to cause by disorientation due to naval use of sonars or naturally by earth’s magnetic field. Many views “stranding” as a suicidal behavior and this is the basis of the name of the “Blue Whale Challenge.”^[2] This game consists of different tasks/challenges which has to be completed within 50 days and is monitored by an administrator. With completion of each task, subsequent task becomes more dangerous and the final challenge is to commit suicide.^[3]

This report is about the first patient relating to “Blue Whale Challenge” reported to the psychiatry outpatient

department, Gauhati Medical College Hospital, Guwahati, Assam, India, and possibly, the first reported case from Northeast India where the patient got an invitation while using the social media site “Facebook.”

XY is a 17-year-old boy of 11th standard. His class teacher noted a scar depicting a fish on his left forearm. The teacher reported the school authority who called the father and advised him to take the student for psychiatric assessment. There was a history of persistent low mood, low self-esteem, and loss of concentration for the last 4 years along with disturbed sleep. Father noted for the last 1 year that his son was irritable and would spend most of the time alone with his mobile. Patient reported that he was feeling ending up his life since the result of the last examination, which he failed, was announced and was exploring ways online to end up his life. When he came to know about the Blue Whale Challenge through social media site Facebook, he happily accepted the Challenge thinking that it will help him to commit suicide peacefully. According to the patient till date, he has accepted 40 challenges of the game, which included watching horror movies in the wee hours of the morning and making cut marks on his body with a sharp instrument. He accepted that completion of each challenge made him feel

better and so he continued. On mental status examination, depressive cognition and suicidal ideation were found. Physical examination findings were within normal limits except figure of blue whale inscribed on the volar aspect of left forearm along with numerous visible healed scar marks of self-inflicted wounds on the surrounding skin. Diagnosis was severe depressive episode without psychotic symptoms as per ICD-10.^[4] He was admitted and prescribed mirtazapine and clonazepam considering available literature showing their efficacy.^[5,6] Blood investigations were within normal limits. Cognitive behavioral therapy and eclectic family therapy were also started.

There is an emerging phenomenon of “cybersuicide,” and the youths are particularly at high risk. “Cybersuicide” refers to the use of the Internet for matters relating to suicide and its ideation. Vulnerable youths are lured by these websites. Thereby, they acquire different ways of intentionally harming self.^[7] The recent phenomenon of the Blue Whale Challenge is only one of them.

Although any adolescent may attempt to explore the challenge out of a sense of curiosity or adventure, those with underlying depressive episode or other psychiatric morbidity are at the maximum risk of engaging actively in it. Children grown up in abusive environment or dysfunctional families, where attachment and appreciation are lacking, may be prone to such addictive games. It is important to note that along with physical hygiene, gadget hygiene needs to be ensured. Mental healthcare providers should counsel patients, particularly adolescents, and their guardians, about the immediate steps at the time of crisis: removal of the gadget, exploring alternatives to surfing the web and providing an understanding attitude. Help may also be available by calling crisis lines, friends, or family members. Clinical treatment for the psychiatric morbidity should be initiated without delay.

Restriction in one method of suicide does not necessarily lead the attempters to try another.^[8] Therefore, awareness among clinicians about this new method of suicide as well as involving the family members in the treatment team can go a long way in preventing suicide in the vulnerable young population.

Declaration of patient consent

The authors certify that they have obtained all appropriate patient consent forms. In the form, the patient has given his consent for his images and other clinical information to be reported in the journal. The patient understand that name and initials will not be published and due efforts will be made to conceal identity, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by India-US Fogarty Training in Chronic Non-Communicable Disorders and Diseases Across

Lifespan Grant #1D43TW009120 (SS Bhandari, Fellow; LB Cottler, PI).

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.


**Rajvardhan Narayan, Bornali Das,
Shyamanta Das, Samrat Singh Bhandari¹**

Department of Psychiatry, Gauhati Medical College Hospital, Guwahati, Assam, ¹Department of Psychiatry, Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences, Sikkim Manipal University, Gangtok, Sikkim, India.
E-mail: samrat.bhandari@yahoo.co.in

REFERENCES

- Balhara YP, Bhargava R, Pakhre A, Bhati N. The “Blue whale challenge”? The first report on a consultation from a health care setting for carrying out “tasks” accessed through a mobile phone application. *Asia Pac Psychiatry* 2018;10:e12317.
- Lupariello F, Curti SM, Coppo E, Racalbutto SS, Di Vella G. Self-harm risk among adolescents and the phenomenon of the “Blue whale challenge”: Case series and review of the literature. *J Forensic Sci* 2018. Doi: 10.1111/1556-4029.13880.
- Mukhra R, Baryah N, Krishan K, Kanchan T. ‘Blue Whale Challenge’: A Game or Crime? *Sci Eng Ethics* 2017;11:1-7.
- World Health Organization. The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders: Clinical Descriptions and Diagnostic Guidelines. Geneva: World Health Organization; 1992.
- Haapasalo-Pesu KM, Vuola T, Lahelma L, Marttunen M. Mirtazapine in the treatment of adolescents with major depression: An open-label, multicenter pilot study. *J Child Adolesc Psychopharmacol* 2004;14:175-84.
- Kishimoto A, Kamata K, Sugihara T, Ishiguro S, Hazama H, Mizukawa R, et al. Treatment of depression with clonazepam. *Acta Psychiatr Scand* 1988;77:81-6.
- Birbal R, Maharajh HD, Birbal R, Clapperton M, Jarvis J, Ragoonath A, et al. Cybersuicide and the adolescent population: Challenges of the future? *Int J Adolesc Med Health* 2009;21:151-9.
- Das S. Suicide: Prevention is the only way. *Dysphrenia* 2011;2:1-3. Available from: http://www.ojpas.npage.de/get_file.php?id=31053884&vnr=247404. [Last accessed on 2017 Aug 30].

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

Access this article online	
Website: www.indianjpsychiatry.org	Quick Response Code 
DOI: 10.4103/psychiatry.IndianJPsychiatry_234_18	

How to cite this article: Narayan R, Das B, Das S, Bhandari SS. The depressed boy who accepted “Blue Whale Challenge.” *Indian J Psychiatry* 2019;61:105-6.

© 2019 Indian Journal of Psychiatry | Published by Wolters Kluwer - Medknow