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Exploring the Role of Nutrition in Mental Health: A Narrative Review

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ABSTRACT: Popularly known as lifestyle medicine and mental health tools present a promising avenue for mitigating depressive symptoms. Lifestyle Global burden of disease 2020 indicates that unipolar depression contributes the second most to increased DALY (disability-adjusted life years) worldwide, but it wasn't even on the top fifteen list in the 1990s. While some mental health problems may warrant pharmacological intervention, non-drug lifestyle behaviors also psychiatry, a growing field pertains to lifestyle pillars such as diet, physical activity, stress, and sleep and their role in psychiatric disorders. Nutrition, a fundamental core in lifestyle medicine, presides over virtually all chronic diseases. Describing nutrition and mental health is challenging and studies of their interactions are even more complex. Nevertheless, gut microdata is critical to understanding this relationship.

KEYWORDS: Lifestyle psychiatry, mental health, nutritional psychiatry, nutrition

I. INTRODUCTION

Most research on nutrition and exercise has predominantly centered around physical health. Much remains to be discovered regarding the relationship between nutrition and mental health, considering its earlier stages of investigations. The range of ingredients in food and physiological responses to them makes research exploring the links between these two time-consuming and effort-intensive. However, as scientific understanding has evolved, there has been an increasing recognition of nutrition and mental health in recent years. This realization has thus led to growing interest among researchers in delving into investigating the relationship between nutrition and mental health. Emerging findings have revealed a complex relationship between diet and mental health. Ruusunen et al revealed that adhering to a prudent diet consisting of whole grains, and a high intake of fruits, vegetables, fish, and legumes was associated with a lower prevalence of depressive • symptoms when compared to a Western diet or mixed diet. Similarly, implied that a whole food dietary pattern is associated with a protective effect against depression, while a processed food dietary pattern increases the odds of depression. It may be attributed to a few plausible explanations. Firstly, living a healthy lifestyle positively impacts both mental and physical health. Second, provide nutrient profiles with the essential elements is important for the brain, like any other organ. The association could also be driven by mental health status influencing people's dietary habits, which could affect their nutrition intake and profile. Healthy diets consisting of fruits and vegetables are abundant in folate and antioxidants, which prevent brain inflammation and oxidative.

II. LIFESTYLE APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH

A lifestyle approach to mental health focuses on using everyday habits and choices to improve and maintain mental well-being. Rather than relying solely on medication or therapy, this approach encourages individuals to take active steps in shaping their lives in ways that can reduce stress, boost mood, and foster emotional resilience. It acknowledges that mental health is not just the absence of illness but also the presence of well-being, which can be influenced by how we live.

Here are key aspects of a lifestyle approach to mental health:

1. Physical Activity

Regular exercise has a profound impact on mental health. It doesn't necessarily mean hitting the gym, but incorporating movement into daily life—such as walking, yoga, dancing, or cycling—can significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and

depression. Physical activity triggers the release of endorphins (the body's "feel-good" chemicals), improves sleep, and boosts overall energy levels, all of which contribute to better mental health.

2. Balanced Nutrition

What we eat can directly influence our mood and mental state. A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins supports brain health and emotional well-being. Omega-3 fatty acids (found in fish and flaxseeds), for instance, have been shown to improve mood and cognitive function, while reducing inflammation associated with depression.

Reducing processed foods, excess sugar, and caffeine can also help manage anxiety and stress.

3. Sleep Hygiene

Good quality sleep is crucial for mental health. Lack of sleep or poor sleep patterns can contribute to mood swings, irritability, and an increased risk of mental health conditions like depression and anxiety. A lifestyle approach to mental health involves establishing regular sleep routines, creating a restful environment, and avoiding stimulants (like caffeine or screens) before bed to improve both the quantity and quality of sleep.

4. Social Connection

Maintaining healthy relationships is vital for mental health. Positive social interactions, whether with friends, family, or community, provide emotional support and help us feel connected. A lifestyle approach encourages cultivating a strong social network, engaging in meaningful conversations, and participating in social activities that promote a sense of belonging.

5. Mindfulness and Stress Management

Mindfulness practices—such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, or journaling—help individuals manage stress and become more aware of their emotions. Learning how to stay present in the moment, rather than ruminating on past regrets or worrying about the future, can reduce anxiety and improve emotional regulation. Regular relaxation techniques can lower cortisol levels (the stress hormone) and promote a calmer mind.

6. Time in Nature

Spending time outdoors, in natural settings like parks, forests, or gardens, can have a profound impact on mental health. Nature walks, hiking, or simply sitting in a natural environment have been shown to lower stress, reduce negative emotions, and improve mood. The connection with nature can help individuals feel more grounded and at peace.

7. Purpose and Meaning

Having a sense of purpose or engaging in activities that are meaningful can contribute to mental well-being. This might involve pursuing a hobby, volunteering, engaging in creative projects, or setting personal goals. A lifestyle that encourages individuals to find and follow their passions fosters a sense of fulfillment and resilience, reducing feelings of hopelessness or emptiness.

8. Limiting Negative Influences

Part of a healthy lifestyle approach involves limiting exposure to negative influences, such as toxic relationships, excessive media consumption, or environments that trigger anxiety. Setting boundaries, curating your social media feeds, and creating spaces that promote positivity are practical ways to protect mental health.

9. Self-Care and Boundaries

Self-care is an essential part of maintaining good mental health. It means taking time to nurture yourself—whether through relaxation, hobbies, pampering, or simply doing something you enjoy. Additionally, setting clear personal boundaries helps manage stress and prevents burnout, allowing you to prioritize your well-being.

III. BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE AND MENTAL HEALTH

The biopsychosocial perspective is a way of understanding mental health that takes into account three important factors: biological, psychological, and social influences. Rather than focusing on just one of these aspects, the biopsychosocial model looks at how all three interact to shape a person's mental health.

1. Biological Factors

These are the physical and genetic aspects that influence mental health. They include things like:

Brain chemistry: Imbalances in brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) like serotonin or dopamine can contribute to mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety.

Genetics: Some mental health conditions run in families, suggesting a genetic link. For example, if a parent has a condition like bipolar disorder, their child may be at higher risk.

Hormonal changes: Hormonal fluctuations, such as those that occur during puberty, pregnancy, or menopause, can affect mood and emotional well-being.

Physical health: Chronic illnesses, brain injuries, or substance abuse can also affect mental health.

In this perspective, mental health conditions like depression or schizophrenia may have a biological basis, such as abnormal brain structure or chemical imbalances, but they are not solely caused by biology. Other factors play a role as well.

2. Psychological Factors

These are the individual mental and emotional aspects that influence how someone thinks, feels, and behaves.

Psychological factors include:

Thought patterns The way we think about ourselves and the world around us can impact our mental health. For example, someone who often has negative thoughts about themselves may be more prone to depression or anxiety.

Emotions: How we manage and cope with our emotions plays a big role in mental well-being. Struggling to manage stress or sadness can lead to mental health issues.

Past experiences: Traumatic events, childhood experiences, or unresolved emotional issues can affect how we respond to challenges in life. People who've experienced abuse or loss may be more vulnerable to mental health problems.

Coping skills: How we deal with stress, setbacks, and difficult situations can either protect or worsen mental health. Healthy coping skills (like problem-solving or relaxation) are protective, while unhealthy coping (like avoidance or substance abuse) can increase vulnerability to mental illness.

Psychological factors also involve how we perceive and interpret events in our lives. For example, someone who has low self-esteem may interpret a minor criticism as a major failure, which can contribute to depression or anxiety.

3. Social Factors

These are the environmental and societal influences that shape our mental health. Social factors include:

Relationships: Our connections with family, friends, and coworkers can have a significant impact on our mental health. Supportive relationships are protective, while toxic or abusive relationships can lead to mental health issues.

Social support Feeling connected to a community or having people to rely on for help is important for mental well-being. Lack of support or isolation can contribute to feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety.

influences: Cultural norms and societal expectations can impact how we experience and express mental health. For example, in some cultures, mental health issues may be stigmatized, preventing people from seeking help.

Life events: Major life changes—like losing a job, moving to a new city, or going through a divorce—can trigger or worsen mental health issues. Chronic stress from financial hardship, discrimination, or social inequality also plays a role.

Work and school environments: The stress levels in a person's work or school life, as well as the overall quality of the environment (supportive vs. toxic), can influence mental health. A demanding, high-pressure job or a bullying school environment, for example, can lead to anxiety or depression.

How It All Works Together

The biopsychosocial model emphasizes that mental health is not caused by just one thing—it's the result of a complex interaction between biology, psychology, and social factors. For example:

- A person with a genetic predisposition to anxiety may develop the condition if they also face chronic stress at work (social factor) and have a negative thought pattern about their ability to cope (psychological factor).
- Alternatively, someone with a family history of depression (biological) might experience depression after going through a traumatic life event (social) and struggling with feelings of hopelessness or self-blame (psychological).

By considering all these factors, the biopsychosocial model helps create a more complete understanding of mental health. It suggests that to treat mental health conditions effectively, you need to address all three components:

Biological treatments might include medication or therapy that focuses on brain chemistry or physical health.

Psychological treatments can involve cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), mindfulness, or other strategies to change unhealthy thinking patterns or improve emotional regulation.

Social interventions might include improving relationships, social support, or addressing life stressors

IV. NUTRITION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Nutrition and mental health are closely connected in ways that are often overlooked. What we eat doesn't just fuel our bodies—it also plays a huge role in how we think, feel, and manage stress. Healthy eating can help improve mood, reduce the risk of mental health issues like depression and anxiety, and support brain function. On the other hand, poor eating habits can contribute to mental health struggles. Here's how nutrition impacts our mental well-being:

1. Brain Health and Function

The brain, like any other organ, needs the right nutrients to function properly. It uses nutrients from the foods we eat to produce chemicals (neurotransmitters) that regulate mood, behavior, and thinking.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Found in fish like salmon, nuts, and seeds, omega-3 fatty acids are essential for brain health. They help form the structure of brain cells and are crucial for communication between neurons. Research shows that a lack of omega-3s is linked to depression and anxiety.

B Vitamins: B vitamins, especially B6, B12, and folate, play an important role in producing neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine, which regulate mood. Low levels of these vitamins have been linked to depression, fatigue, and memory problems. Good sources include leafy greens, whole grains, eggs, and legumes.

Amino Acids: These are the building blocks of proteins and are crucial for producing neurotransmitters. For example, the amino acid tryptophan is needed to produce serotonin, the "feel-good" neurotransmitter. Foods like turkey, dairy, nuts, and seeds are rich in tryptophan.

2. Mood Regulation

Certain nutrients can help stabilize mood and prevent the mood swings often associated with conditions like depression and anxiety.

Magnesium: This mineral is involved in regulating neurotransmitters that influence mood. Magnesium deficiency has been linked to increased levels of anxiety and depression. Foods rich in magnesium include leafy green vegetables, nuts, seeds, and whole grains.

Zinc: Zinc is involved in brain function and mood regulation. Studies have shown that low zinc levels may contribute to depression. Good sources of zinc include red meat, shellfish, legumes, and seeds. **Vitamin D** Known as the "sunshine vitamin," vitamin D is produced by the body when the skin is exposed to sunlight. A deficiency in vitamin D has been linked to depression, particularly during the winter months when sunlight is limited. You can get vitamin D from fortified foods, fatty fish, or supplements.

3. Gut Health and the "Gut-Brain Axis"

The gut and brain are connected through a system called the gut-brain axis. This means that what's happening in your digestive system can directly affect your brain, and vice versa. A healthy gut can lead to better mental health, while an unhealthy gut may contribute to conditions like anxiety or depression.

Probiotics: These are beneficial bacteria found in fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and kimchi. They help balance gut bacteria and have been shown to have a positive impact on mental health, possibly by reducing inflammation and promoting the production of moodregulating neurotransmitters.

Fiber: Eating a diet high in fiber (from fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes) promotes a healthy gut microbiome, which in turn supports better brain health. Fiber-rich foods also help maintain steady blood sugar levels, reducing mood swings and irritability.

Prebiotics: These are foods that feed the good bacteria in your gut. They are found in foods like garlic, onions, bananas, and asparagus. A healthy gut microbiome has been linked to improved mood and lower levels of anxiety.

4. Blood Sugar and Energy Levels

Eating too much sugar and processed food can cause rapid spikes and crashes in blood sugar, leading to mood swings, irritability, and fatigue. On the other hand, balanced meals that include complex carbohydrates (like whole grains), protein, and healthy fats help stabilize blood sugar and maintain steady energy levels, which can positively affect mood and focus.

Complex Carbs: Foods like oats, quinoa, sweet potatoes, and brown rice provide slow-releasing energy, helping to maintain steady blood sugar and prevent the irritability that often accompanies sugar crashes.

5. The Impact of Inflammatory Foods

Some foods can promote inflammation in the body, which has been linked to mental health problems like depression and anxiety.

Processed Foods and Trans Fats: High consumption of processed foods, fast foods, sugary snacks, and artificial additives can increase inflammation in the body and disrupt brain function. These foods are often low in essential nutrients and can contribute to mood swings and mental fatigue.

Refined Sugar and Excessive Caffeine: Diets high in sugar can trigger inflammation and alter brain function, contributing to anxiety and depression. Excessive caffeine, while providing a short-term energy boost, can increase anxiety and disrupt sleep, which in turn affects mental health.

6. Hydration and Mental Clarity

Staying hydrated is crucial for overall health, including mental health. Even mild dehydration can affect your concentration, memory, and mood. When you're dehydrated, you may feel more tired, irritable, or anxious. Water is the best choice, but hydrating foods like fruits and vegetables

7. The Role of a Balanced Diet in Preventing Mental Health Problems

A balanced diet that includes a wide variety of nutrient-dense foods supports the brain and body in many ways. The right balance of protein, healthy fats, fiber, vitamins, and minerals helps prevent mental health issues from developing and supports recovery for those who are dealing with conditions like depression, anxiety, or stress.

Whole Foods vs. Processed Foods: A diet rich in whole foods like vegetables, fruits, lean proteins, and healthy fats supports better mental health. Processed foods, on the other hand, often lack the nutrients needed to maintain mental well-being and may contribute to brain fog, mood swings, and depression.

V. ROLE OF NUTRITION IN MENTAL WELL-BEING

Nutrition plays a crucial role in mental well-being, and what we eat can significantly impact how we feel, think, and cope with life's challenges. The brain, like any other organ, needs the right nutrients to function well, and our diet can directly influence our mood, energy, and cognitive abilities. In simple terms, a healthy diet supports a healthy mind.

Here's how nutrition contributes to mental well-being 1. Brain Function and Mood Regulation

The brain requires specific nutrients to produce chemicals that regulate our mood and thoughts. These chemicals are called neurotransmitters and they help control emotions, behavior, and even sleep. Certain nutrients are essential for their production:

Omega-3 fatty acids (found in fishlike salmon, flaxseeds, and walnuts) are key for brain health. They support the structure of brain cells and improve communication between neurons, which can help boost mood and reduce feelings of anxiety and depression.

B vitamins (especially B6, B12, and folate) are involved in producing neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine. These are often referred to as "feel-good" chemicals. A deficiency in B vitamins can contribute to mood swings, fatigue, and depression. Foods rich in B vitamins include leafy greens, beans, eggs, and whole grains.

Magnesium and zinc are minerals that also play a role in brain function and mood regulation. Magnesium can help manage stress and anxiety, while zinc helps stabilize mood. You can find these minerals in foods like nuts, seeds, legumes, and leafy greens.

Gut Health and the Gut-Brain Connection

The gut and the brain are closely linked through something called the gut-brain axis. This means that the health of your digestive system can influence your mental health. A balanced and healthy gut can lead to better mental well-being, while an unhealthy gut can contribute to anxiety, depression, and stress.

Probiotics, found in foods like yogurt, kefir, and fermented vegetables, promote the growth of beneficial gut bacteria, which can have a positive impact on mood and anxiety. They help reduce inflammation in the gut and brain, improving emotional well-being.

Prebiotics, found in foods like bananas, onions, garlic, and whole grains, feed the good bacteria in your gut, further supporting the connection between a healthy gut and better mental health.

1. Stabilizing Blood Sugar

What you eat affects your blood sugar levels, which can influence your mood and energy throughout the day. When you eat a lot of sugary or processed foods, your blood sugar levels spike quickly and then crash, leading to irritability, mood swings, and fatigue. On the other hand, a balanced diet with whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats helps keep blood sugar levels steady, leading to more consistent energy and a more stable mood.

- Foods like whole grains, beans, vegetables and healthy fats (such as avocado, nuts, and olive oil) provide a slow, steady release of energy, keeping both your body and mind functioning at their best.

2. Reducing Inflammation

Chronic inflammation in the body is linked to mental health issues like depression and anxiety. Certain foods can either reduce or increase inflammation.

- On the other hand, processed foods refined sugars and **trans fats** (found in many fast foods and packaged snacks) can increase inflammation, contributing to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety.

3. The Role of Hydration

Staying hydrated is essential for mental clarity and emotional balance. Even mild dehydration can lead to feelings of fatigue, irritability, and difficulty concentrating.

- Drinking water, and eating water-rich foods like fruits and vegetables (e.g., cucumbers, watermelon, oranges), helps maintain hydration and support cognitive function, which directly affects mood and energy levels.

4. Nutrients for Stress Management

Some nutrients can help your body and mind cope better with stress:

Vitamin C (found in citrus fruits, strawberries, and bell peppers) is an antioxidant that helps reduce stress and boosts the immune system.

Adaptogens like ashwagandha (found in supplements) can help the body adapt to stress, reducing anxiety and promoting relaxation.

Complex carbohydrates like those found in whole grains and starchy vegetables, help stabilize blood sugar levels and reduce the production of stress hormones like cortisol.

5. Sleep and Mental Health

Good nutrition plays an important role in sleep quality, which is crucial for mental well-being. Poor sleep can contribute to mental health problems like anxiety and depression.

Tryptophan, an amino acid found in foods like turkey, nuts, and seeds, is used by the body to produce serotonin and melatonin, hormones that help regulate mood and sleep.

- Avoiding large meals, caffeine, and alcohol late in the day can also help improve sleep quality, supporting better mental health.

6. Mood-Boosting Foods

There are certain foods that have been linked to a positive effect on mood and can help reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression:

Leafy greens like spinach and kale are rich in folate, which is important for the production of serotonin.

Nuts and seeds, particularly walnuts and flaxseeds, are high in omega-3s and magnesium, which support mood regulation.

VI. ROLE OF NUTRITION IN PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS

Nutrition plays a significant role in managing and potentially preventing psychiatric disorders. What we eat affects our brain chemistry, mood, and overall mental health, influencing conditions like depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and even disorders like ADHD. A balanced diet rich in essential nutrients can support brain function, help regulate emotions, and improve the effectiveness of psychiatric treatments. Conversely, poor nutrition can contribute to the development or worsening of mental health conditions. Here's how nutrition affects various psychiatric disorders:

1. Depression

Depression is often linked to imbalances in brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) like serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine. Nutritional deficiencies can affect these brain chemicals, leading to or worsening symptoms of depression.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids: These healthy fats, found in fish (like salmon and mackerel), flaxseeds, and walnuts, are crucial for brain function. Research shows that omega-3s can help reduce the symptoms of depression by improving brain cell communication and supporting mood-regulating neurotransmitters.

B Vitamins Deficiencies in B₁₂, B₉, and folate have been linked to depression. These vitamins help produce neurotransmitters such as serotonin. Foods rich in B vitamins, such as leafy greens, eggs, and beans, can help improve mood and prevent depression.

Magnesium: This mineral helps regulate neurotransmitters and can act as a natural antidepressant. Low levels of magnesium are often found in people with depression. Good sources include nuts, seeds, leafy greens, and whole grains.

Vitamin D: Often called the "sunshine vitamin," vitamin D deficiency has been linked to depression, particularly during the winter months. Vitamin D helps regulate mood and is found in fortified foods, egg yolks, and fatty fish.

2. Anxiety

Anxiety disorders can be linked to neurotransmitter imbalances increased inflammation in the body. Diet can play a significant role in reducing anxiety symptoms by influencing both these factors.

Magnesium: As mentioned, magnesium helps regulate neurotransmitters and can reduce the physiological symptoms of anxiety (like muscle tension and rapid heart rate). Many people with anxiety are magnesium-deficient, so foods like almonds, spinach, and legumes can be helpful.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Omega-3s are also beneficial for reducing anxiety. They help lower inflammation in the brain and regulate neurotransmitter function. Eating fatty fish, flaxseeds, or chia seeds can support better mental health.

Probiotics Gut health plays a role in mood regulation through the gut-brain axis A healthy gut microbiome, supported by probiotics (found in foods like yogurt, kefir, and fermented vegetables), can help reduce anxiety and improve overall well-being.

Vitamin B Complex B vitamins (especially B12 and B6) help manage stress and regulate mood. A deficiency can make someone more vulnerable to anxiety. Foods rich in B vitamins include whole grains, meats, eggs, and leafy vegetables.
Complex Carbs Eating complex carbohydrates like oats, quinoa, and sweet potatoes can help stabilize blood sugar levels and promote serotonin production, which can help manage anxiety.

3. Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a severe mental disorder characterized by distorted thinking, hallucinations, and delusions. Although the exact cause of schizophrenia is not fully understood, research suggests that both genetic and environmental factors including nutrition, play a role.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Some studies suggest that people with schizophrenia often have low levels of omega-3s. Including more omega-3-rich foods (like fatty fish and flaxseeds) may help alleviate some symptoms and improve cognitive function.

Antioxidants People with schizophrenia may have higher levels of oxidative stress, which can damage brain cells. Antioxidants like vitamin e Vitamin C and zinc help protect brain cells from damage. These can be found in fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds.

Acids Amino acids like glutamine and tryptophan are important for neurotransmitter function. A lack of these amino acids can affect mental health. Tryptophan is found in turkey, eggs, and seeds and is important for serotonin production, which regulates mood and sleep.

4. Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADHD is a condition characterized by symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. While the exact causes of ADHD are still being studied, there is evidence that nutrition can impact the severity of symptoms.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids Omega-3s play a key role in brain development and function. Research has shown that children with ADHD often have lower levels of omega-3s in their diet. Adding fatty fish, flaxseeds, and walnuts to the diet can improve focus and reduce hyperactivity.

Protein Protein helps maintain steady blood sugar levels and may improve concentration and reduce impulsivity in people with ADHD. Foods like lean meats, fish, eggs, and legumes are excellent sources of protein.

Iron and Zinc: Deficiencies in iron and zinc have been linked to ADHD symptoms, particularly in children. Iron is essential for dopamine production, and low levels can result in attention problems. Zinc helps regulate neurotransmitter function. Iron-rich foods include lean meats, beans, and spinach, while zinc can be found in nuts, seeds, and shellfish.

Complex Carbohydrates: A diet high in sugar and simple carbohydrates can worsen symptoms of ADHD, as they cause blood sugar levels to spike and crash. A focus on complex carbs—like whole grains and vegetables—can help maintain stable energy levels and improve focus.

5. Eating Disorders (e.g., Anorexia, Bulimia)

Nutrition plays a critical role in both the prevention and treatment of eating disorders. People with eating disorders often have severe nutrient deficiencies which can affect brain chemistry and emotional regulation.

Essential Fatty Acids: Low levels of omega-3s and other essential fats are common in people with eating disorders and are associated with mood instability and cognitive impairment. Eating a diet rich in omega-3s from fish, nuts, and seeds can help improve mood and brain function.

- Vitamin Deficiencies: Deficiencies in vitamins (like B12 and folate) and minerals (like zinc and iron) are common in those with eating disorders and can worsen depression, fatigue, and cognitive dysfunction. Ensuring a nutrient-dense diet can help restore mental and physical health.

it easier for people to engage in therapy and recovery.

VII. CONCLUSION

A growing body of research underscores a direct relationship between nutrition and mental health. However, there is little translatable evidence and little understanding of how these effects arise due to a lack of methodologically rigorous research. Nutritional interventions, in comparison to pharmacological interventions, are more challenging to conduct as their target is not specific, and are not consumed in a specific amount. Therefore, nutritional research is now more focused on dietary patterns rather than individual nutrients or supplements. The takeaway message of this review is that eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, seeds, and nuts could be one of the best ways to prevent mental illnesses. Foods containing added sugars or flours, as well as animal fats, processed meats, and butter are recommended to be avoided.

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