

## Positive Correlation between Stress, Weight Gain And Physical Body Pain Observed

21 May 2020 | Opinion

**"In today's unpredictable world where COVID-19 is putting our lives on hold, the intense stress has caused a spike in weight gain and manifested our anxiety into physical pain" says Dr Ivan Puah, Medical Director Of Amaris B. Clinic, Singapore**



The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives and livelihood of many people. It has caused insecurities, anxiety and a feeling of helplessness among those affected. All these and more increase stress levels and if not managed well can lead to a multitude of health conditions. Dr Ivan Puah, Medical Director at Amaris B. Clinic, understands the adverse effects of having poor mental health. Having been posted to the Institute of Mental Health Singapore (IMH) as part of his training, he has had the first-hand experience in dealing with patients affected by the condition. He was also a part of the team of doctors who were on the frontline during the battle against the SARS epidemic back in 2003. During that period, Dr Puah witnessed the impact on stress levels and mental well being brought on by the outbreak.

### Stress In The Face of Adversities

During the period between January and April 2020, and before the implementation of the Circuit Breaker measure, Dr Ivan Puah experienced an increase in the number of patients with concerns about weight management and musculoskeletal pain seeking help at his clinic. During the consultation, they voiced their concerns about the current COVID-19 pandemic and how it is causing insecurities and undue stress.

Unlike the SARS outbreak of 2003, the current COVID-19 pandemic comes with measures that were not in place during the former. These include the work-from-home directive, temporary ceasing of non-essential businesses services, social distancing measures and others. Arguably, these can be overwhelming for anyone considering that humans are social creatures by nature.

Social media may present some respite in terms of connectivity, but the onslaught of negativity in the form of fake news and conspiracy theories surrounding the pandemic does nothing but adds on to anxiety and stress levels. Unable to differentiate

between fact and fiction, our emotions get the better of us.

## **Stress and Wellbeing**

Emotions, particularly in the face of adversities, can be challenging to manage. Anxiety, nervousness and even fear can get a tight grip on an individual, making it difficult for them to function even with the simplest of daily tasks. Emotional and stress eating is a real condition. This most always leads to weight gain, which in turn can lead to other even more severe health conditions. Stress can also be the cause for the onset of skin issues and even physical pain. For those already suffering from chronic pain, the latter can be debilitating.

Dr Puah, with his extensive experience, anticipates that when the Circuit Breaker measure eases, people will be seeking help to remedy their situation.

## **The Possible Future**

Confidence is one of the key elements in overcoming current and in facing potential adversities in one's life. Dr Puah predicts that there will be a gradual rise in demand for health and wellness needs, including that of the appearance. After all, people should always put our best foot and face forward.

The remedies will come in an array of forms. These include gym activities and other physical exercise routines, personal beauty treatments, including aesthetic treatments, weight loss and weight management programs. Body sculpting procedures may also be in the books as they not only sculpt the physique but eliminate stubborn fat effectively. These fats are accumulated over time and causes range from genetic to bad habits such as continuous stress eating.

As for pain, physical therapy will be sought. Myotherapy is a form of physical therapy that helps to relieve pain - ones brought on by stress and anxiety included. Myotherapy uses massage, trigger point therapy, stretching, corrective exercises, and assessment techniques to treat the pain effectively.

The uncertainties surrounding COVID-19 may not dissipate overnight as viruses tend to mutate, making the discovery of vaccinations a challenge - but that is best left to the experts. For the rest, on the other hand, can do their part and one way of doing so is to manage the stress levels. Having elevated confidence can help to ease the effort.

"It is important to be aware that to be worried about something, you cannot control is redundant. Stress can change or ache a person. Seek help if you feel helpless." - Dr. Ivan Puah