

Battling with epilepsy and treatment-resistant depression as a doctor

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Depression is the most common psychiatric comorbidity in patients with epilepsy. According to a systematic review, depression co-exists in 23.1% of epileptic patients, in comparison to 6.6% in the general population. Doctors are at an increased risk of mental illness and it is estimated that around a third of doctors will suffer from mental illness at some point in their career. Concerningly, a review in *The Lancet* suggests that only about 13%-36% of physicians will seek help for their mental health. The reasons for this are multifactorial, but include stigmatization, lack of support from employers and colleagues, fear of discrimination and judgement. This is particularly concerning, as globally, doctors are 2-5 times more likely to die by suicide than the general population.

I have battled with epilepsy and severe treatment-resistant depression and underwent a course of ketamine therapy and electroconvulsive therapy. These were highly effective, but being a doctor and a patient simultaneously was difficult. I go on to describe my experiences with both - the stigma, the judgement and the discrimination that I encountered and how I overcame these. I then go on to describe my experiences with epilepsy and how this has impacted on my work both positively and negatively. I explain how being both a patient and doctor simultaneously has given me a unique perspective and understanding of the needs and struggles that patients experience and this in turn allows me to help them in a special and unique way. I discuss the various forms of support that I received from different organizations and individuals for both neuropsychiatric conditions, and make recommendations for support that could be put in place to help other doctors struggling with neurological and/or psychiatric difficulties within the medical profession.

Biography

Minna Chang graduated from Imperial College London. She is currently working in Epsom and St Helier University Trust in London, UK..