Contrasting portrayal of psychiatric genomics in Indian print news media

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Social representations in health have several consequences in influencing attitudes and behaviours, and are important factors in concepts such as health literacy and stigma. We examined how the Indian print news media portray psychiatric genomics using a mixed-method approach of content analysis. The sanguine picture of the optimism portrayed might represent an unjustified hyping in the worst cases. There was a gap between optimism showcased in the 'predicted quality of life' and the voices heard in the newspapers to corroborate the same. The prevalence of anti-stigmatizing themes hinted towards a progressive approach being disseminated to the readers. There is a visible interest in personalized medicine. The curve of psychiatric genomics leans towards precision medicine in the articles based on the themes analysed and 'pharmacogenomic testing' being mentioned. However, whether or not it will be marred by contrasting research studies and artistic depiction in movies is something to look forward to. It is reasonable to assume that a certain amount of skepticism and apprehension would be a possible reaction for those who read contradictory views about the field. This paves the way for future studies to understand public perception on this topic.

Keywords: Content analysis, mental health, mixed-method approach, newspapers, psychiatric genomics.

However, limited studies have mapped how psychiatric genetic research is portrayed in the media. Conrad[6] identified 'genetic optimism' frame as the most dominant in his study of genetics and mental illness. The genetic optimism frame has been indicated to distort some of the findings, misrepresenting and reifying the impact of genes on mental disorders. Dixon[7] discussed mental health genetic research in the UK newspapers and identified genetic optimism as the most frequently found theme. Wilde *et al.*[8] attempted to investigate how Australian print news media portrayed psychiatric genetics from 1996 to 2009. This led us to question and study the dynamics of psychiatric genomics with respect to India.

Understanding how these are portrayed in news media can inform how these concepts are used for communication with the public and help when researchers are communicating with the news media outlets. Given the contentious nature of discoveries in psychiatric genomics, the prevalent hype or hope, and no such study conducted for the Indian newspapers, we performed a content analysis of psychiatric genomics in the Indian news articles using a mixed-method approach.

Methodology