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# Life sucks, anti-depressants sell

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RISHIKA Khanna seemed to have a perfect life. A great job, caring husband, house in Delhi's posh Greater Kailash area and everything else she had ever wished for. Yet, she went into bouts of hysteria and experienced mood-swings. On consulting a psychiatrist, Rishika was diagnosed with depression. It was ascribed to an extremely stressful and anxious lifestyle owing to rigorous work schedule. This is not just a one-off case. According to WHO, depression ranks among the 10 leading causes of disability and will become the second-largest cause of the global health burden by 2020. With cases like these on the rise, there has been a surge in the sales of anti-depressants. At present, the anti-depressant market is about Rs 350 crore and has grown by about 20% growth in the last year. In fact, anti-depressants are now the second-largest class of prescription drugs after heart-related medications.

"We have witnessed a 30% growth over last year across our three anti-depressants brands, which include Symbal and Milnice. Increasing stress levels at workplaces and changing social dynamics have led to rise in depression levels among the current population," said Torrent Pharmaceuticals strategic marketing head Ruchir Modi.

It's being feared that one in 10 men and one in five women will suffer from a depressive disorder



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at some point in their lives in developing countries, including India. At this rate, about 17-18% of the entire population in India could be under depression at any point of their lives. With a population of more than one billion, India has fewer than 4,000 psychiatrists, one-tenth the US total, that too clustered in the urban areas.

Competition to perform at workplaces as well as fulfilling social commitments is taking its toll. How-

ever, awareness on psychiatric help is definitely improving. "There are several reasons for the increased sales of anti-depressants. The growing awareness of depression treatment, increased efficacy of the drugs, zero addiction and shorter courses have contributed towards it. Earlier, people were skeptical in approaching psychiatrists to tackle depression. On an average, a practicing psychiatrist treats about 20 patients a day," said Max

Healthcare department of mental health chief Dr Samir Parikh.

"The market has moved from Rs 247.4 crore to Rs 350 crore, with a four year CAGR of

10% indicating an increase in use of anti-depressants. Nuclear families, lack of support systems, growing stress and a rise in incidence and diagnosis of depression across India is increasing the use of anti-depressants. More over, the stigma associated with psychiatric counseling is on the decline, helping more people to reach out for support. We have recently launched ACMIL (Milnacipran) latest molecule in the anti-depressant space," said a Ranbaxy spokesperson. "Depression is largely under-diagnosed and undertreated by general practitioners and physicians. Our brand, Daxid is among the leading brands of anti-depressants," said Pfizer India pharmaceutical marketing director Anjan Sen.

**mind & BODY**