

Trends in Renaming the Korean Terms for Psychiatry, Schizophrenia, and Epilepsy

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Received date: June 09, 2016; Accepted date: June 10, 2016; Published date: June 15, 2016

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Editorial

The Korean terms for psychiatry, schizophrenia, and epilepsy have been renamed in the last few years. The significance of, and the reason behind the renaming of the Korean terms is discussed below.

Firstly, the Korean term for psychiatry (jung-shin-eui-hak; sometimes mistaken for 'the field for treating insane people') was changed to a new name, meaning 'medicine of mental health promotion and wellbeing' (jung-shin-geon-gang-eui-hak), by Korean Neuropsychiatric Association in 2010. The renaming was aimed to ameliorate a negative connotation related to the Korean term for mind or spirit (jung-shin), establish the identity of psychiatry in Korea, and denote a paradigm shift from symptomatic management to mental health promotion in the realm of psychiatry [1-3]. Hence, renaming the term for psychiatry reflects the recent change in the prevalence and distribution of mental disorders and the increase in demand in services for mental health promotion in South Korea [4,5].

Secondly, the Korean term for schizophrenia was renamed from jung-shin-bun-yeol-byung (literally meaning 'mind splitting disorder') to jo-hyeon-byung (attunement disorder) in 2011 by Korean Neuropsychiatric Association and Korean Society of Schizophrenia Research in order to reduce the stigma of patients with schizophrenia in South Korea. Jung-shin-bun-yeol-byung denotes the Korean pronunciation of seshin-bunretsu-byo, which was approved as the formal translation for schizophrenia, in 1937 by Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology. In 2002, seshin-bunretsu-byo was changed to togo-shitcho-sho (literally meaning 'integration disorder'). However, jo-hyeon denotes tuning the Korean string instrument (Komungo) and is quoted from a passage of a Korean Buddhist text as follows: "Studying is similar to tuning the string instrument, in which tightness and looseness should be balanced". Hence, in jo-hyeon-byung, schizophrenia has been metaphorically considered to be "a disease of inadequate tuning of the neural network. "Furthermore, attunement disorder, which is the English translation for jo-hyeon-byung, denotes the disintegration of inter-subjectivity, and confusion for the certainties of the self and the world from the perspective of phenomenological psychopathology [6-8]. In addition, in 2012, using jo-hyeon as a prefix, the Korean nomenclatures for schizophreniform disorder,

schizoaffective disorder, schizotypal (personality) disorder, and schizoid personality disorder was also renamed [9].

Thirdly, the Korean term for epilepsy was renamed from gan-jil (sometimes mistaken for insanity) to noi-jeon-jeung (literally meaning 'cerebro-electric disorder') in 2010 by Korean Epilepsy Society and Korean Epilepsy Association, to denote the essence of the disease pathogenesis and reduce the stigma associated with epilepsy [10]. Changing the Korean name for epilepsy has also given inspiration to how to make a similar change in China [11].

In summary, it can be concluded that renaming the Korean terms for psychiatry, schizophrenia, and epilepsy has been commonly aimed to reduce the social stigma associated with psychiatric and neurological disorders, meet the demands and challenges of the present times, and reflect the essential characteristics of the mental health field or disease pathogenesis. Hence, in general, this recent renaming of Korean nomenclature for psychiatry, schizophrenia, and epilepsy, might inspire establishing newer and more positive identities for psychiatric disorders elsewhere as well.

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