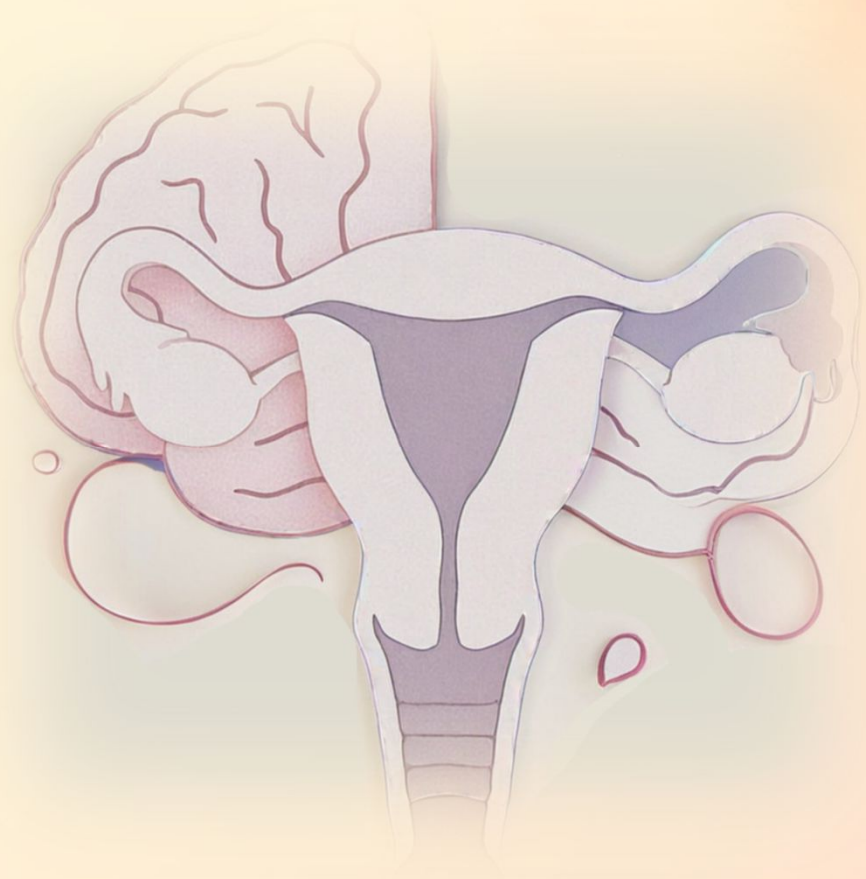




Invisible Wounds: The Psychological Impact of Endometriosis

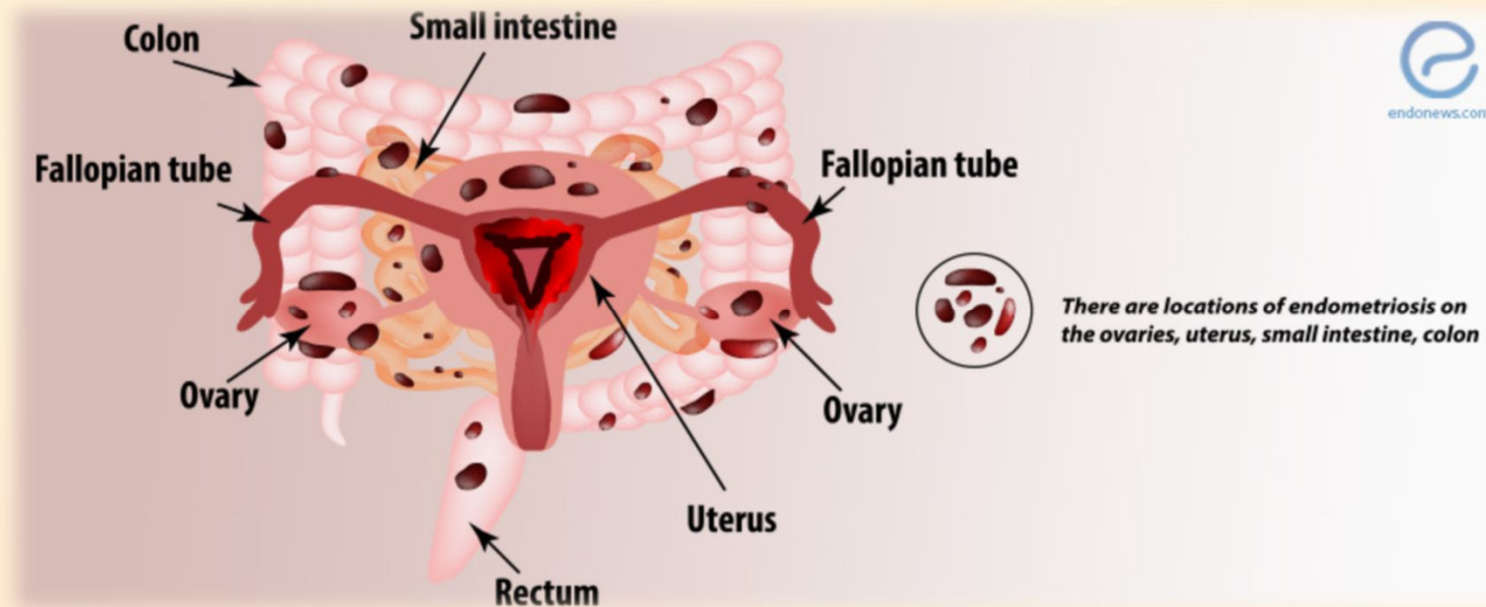
Introduction

- This research explores how endometriosis contributes to depression and anxiety due to chronic pain, infertility, and social stigma. It asks: Why is the link to mental health often overlooked? How do stigma and misdiagnosis affect patients?



What is Endometriosis?

- Endometriosis affects 10-15% of reproductive-aged women. Symptoms include pelvic pain, dyspareunia, and infertility. Many suffer for 8–12 years before receiving a diagnosis due to symptom overlap and societal minimization.



- Endometrial-like tissue grows outside the uterus, which commonly affects the ovaries, fallopian tubes, bladder, bowels, and pelvic lining. In rare cases, it can spread beyond the pelvic organs.

Psychological Effects



- Endometriosis leads to higher rates of anxiety and depression. WHO estimates up to 87.5% of patients experience anxiety. Delayed diagnosis and dismissal by providers amplify psychological distress.

Impact on Relationships & Identity



- Dyspareunia and chronic fatigue affect intimacy, self-worth, and emotional well-being. Patients report guilt, shame, and isolation, affecting romantic and social relationships.

Cultural Silence & Stigma

- Menstrual pain is often normalized. Cultural and medical gaslighting discourage patients from seeking help, reinforcing shame and delaying proper care.
- From an early age, many are taught to normalize menstrual pain and to remain silent about it in public.



Hormonal Treatment Effects



- Hormonal therapies can alleviate physical symptoms but often cause mood swings, irritability, and identity changes. These effects are under-discussed with patients.
- Some of the symptoms I have experienced include intense emotional shifts, moments of uncontrolled anger that felt out of character, and a deep sense of identity loss.



Holistic Treatment & Recommendations

Integrated care should include both gynecological and psychological support. Provider education and routine mental health screening are crucial.

Conclusion



- Endometriosis impacts both physical and mental health. A holistic, patient-centered approach can improve outcomes, empower patients, and build trust in the medical system.

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