

Need for improved information and awareness about mental disorders

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Information that we have

- At least 500 million people in the world suffer from mental disorders
- In industrialized countries 40% and in the poor countries 80% of all the mentally ill receive no help from the health system.
- If appropriate care were to be provided at least half of those affected would be fully functional

Information that we have

- The frequency and severity of mental disorders is likely to grow in the future for a number of reasons including
 - Demographic changes
 - Successes of medicine in extending life expectancy of the population and of those disabled and/or ill
 - Changes of the human environment

Information that we have

- Care for people with mental disorders should include
 - A health system intervention
 - Adjustments of the environment in which people with mental disorders live
 - An active involvement of patients and their families in their treatment.
 - Concrete support to families or other carers

Information that we have

- Primary prevention of a number of mental and neurological disorders is possible and could significantly diminish the incidence of these disorders
- Most of the primary prevention of mental disorders depends on an involvement of social sectors and disciplines other than psychiatry and mental health services.

The paradox

- Although the problems related to mental and neurological disorders are huge, both for the sufferers and for their societies
- Although effective preventive and therapeutic measures are available and could be applied on a large scale

In LAMIC countries little is done to reduce the prevalence of mental disorders and in richer countries resources available for mental health programs are not optimally used.

A sample of solutions proposed...

- Develop more information about the form and frequency of mental disorders so as to convince decision makers about their importance for public health
- Introduce arrangements by which the tasks that are traditionally carried by psychiatry can be shifted to primary and general health care
- Strengthen health education about mental illness

A sample of solutions proposed....

- Develop guidelines and instruction manuals that will make it possible to provide care in different types of settings and institutions
- Change the site of treatment - from hospitals to community centres and family care
- Introduce social service arrangements and legislation in order to assist those who have been disabled by mental illness

The consequences of stigmatization

Sofar, none of the solutions listed (and most of them have been tried by well qualified leaders) has found wide application nor resulted in a significant improvement of the lot of the mentally ill.

An obstacle to all the solutions

The stigma of mental illness

The meaning of stigma of mental illness

- Stigma of mental illness indicates that the person who has such an illness is of no value to society. It implies that recovery is impossible
- Stigma might also indicate that the persons with mental illness are unpredictable in their behaviour, that they are dangerous and likely to cause harm in any activity they do. Thus, why help them ?

The meaning of stigma of mental illness

- The stigma affects all that is related to mental illness thus
 - The image and effectiveness of personnel dealing with mental illness,
 - The image of treatment institutions,
 - The image of treatment methods,
 - The legislation concerning the mentally ill.
 - The priority given to mental health programmes

The information that we need

- We need information that will help to circumvent or reduce stigma and open the door to basic reforms of care This includes information about
 - the indirect cost of mental illness. Estimates that exist come from a small number of highly developed countries
 - the effectiveness of different approaches to the reduction of stigmatization

The information that we need

- We also need valid information about
 - The effectiveness of different types of guidelines and recommendations
 - The effectiveness of treatment methods used in field conditions in different settings
 - Information about the prevalence of mental disorders in people suffering from non-communicable and other chronic diseases

The information that we need

- We also need valid information about
 - The quality and acceptability of different models of care (evaluated by professionals, by patients, by their families and by the general population)
 - The impact of major social and technological changes on mental health and illness (e.g. of the informatics revolution)

Examples of how current paradigms might have to be changed to advance the cause of mental health

Paradigms	Apparent reason for limited success	Effects of application	Paths to take in the future
Obtain more information	Few are interested or likely to believe it	The converted know it, the others forget it	Change type of information
Health education	Insufficient resources	Greater health literacy	Shift to fighting stigma
Guidelines and instructions	Lack of consensus and of previous training	Usually modest unless linked to special incentives	Change basic education and provide incentives in service

Examples of how current paradigms might have to be changed to advance the cause of mental health

Solution	Apparent reason for limited success	Effects of application	Paths to take in the future
Shift of treatment to the community	Lack of resources and leadership	Success usually limited to small areas	Help families in concrete terms and seek local solutions
Task <i>shifting</i>	Reluctance of health workers	Limited to a few conditions and places	Task <i>sharing</i> with willing health workers
Education about psychiatry	Vagueness of instruction and enormity of task	Limited so far	Change training style. focus and simplify

Summary

- Success in dealing with the vast problems related to mental illness depends on (i) the **reduction of the stigma** of mental illness and on (ii) the acceptance of the need for **fundamental changes of paradigms of mental health care.**
- The reduction of the stigma of mental illness is possible and the new strategies of mental health care can be defined now.