Making mental health a global development priority

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Making mental health a global development priority

On 13-14 April in Washington DC, the World Bank and the World Health Organization co-hosted a series of events – in which ministers of finance and development agencies participated - to move mental health from the margins to the mainstream of the global development agenda. “Despite hundreds of millions of people around the world living with mental disorders, mental health has remained in the shadows,” said Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank Group. “This is not just a public health issue — it’s a development issue. We need to act now because the lost productivity is something the global economy simply cannot afford.” More information on the “Out of the Shadows: Making Mental Health a Global Development Priority” event can be found at:

World Health Organization website
World Bank website
mhGap Programme expands to include scalable psychological interventions

The value of psychological interventions is increasingly recognized across the world, as evidenced by the adoption of the Comprehensive mental health action plan 2013-2020 by Member States. WHO’s mhGAP Programme is expanding its scope and reach by developing guidance and implementation guides for scalable psychological interventions. A new WHO psychological intervention manual was released this week.

Access the new publication
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Mobilizing French communities through Mental Health Weeks

Mental Health Weeks promote mental health by raising awareness throughout France. Every year for the past 27 years, users’ groups, families’ associations, professionals, researchers and local elected politicians come together to offer conferences, concerts, exhibits, workshops and other platforms for dialogues about mental health.

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Mainstreaming mental health in Ethiopia

Government commitment and the establishment of strong partnerships has enabled Ethiopia to bring mental health services to many who previously had no access at all. Training using WHO’s mhGAP tools has been key to scale-up and has increased substantially the number of health workers able to provide care for mental health disorders.

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Building general practitioner capacity in Tunisia by implementing the mhGAP

The mental health treatment gap is high in Tunisia. Mental illness and youth suicide are on the rise. Yet, most general practitioners are not trained to effectively detect, treat and manage mental health problems, and the only mental health hospital in the country is overcrowded. This is why the provision of mental healthcare within the primary health-care system is among the priorities identified by the Ministry of Health in Tunisia. Read more

Belgium: switching to community mental health care

Most people with mental health conditions, including those in Belgium, prefer to be treated and cared for in the environment of their choice. That choice is often their home. However, Belgium has traditionally relied strongly on institutional psychiatric care. Over the past 5 years, mental health reform in the country has resulted in a new, inclusive care model with a focus on community-based services.

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Zika: when an infectious disease collides with neurological disorders

In the past, we have not often associated mosquitoes with neurological disorders. The latest public health emergency of international concern, announced on 1 February 2016, was actually not declared because of an epidemic of Zika virus, an infectious disease. Rather, it was because of the surge in the number of microcephaly and Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) cases in the Region of the Americas. Local health authorities from six countries have reported microcephaly and other malformations potentially associated with Zika virus infection. Thirteen countries and territories worldwide have reported an increase of Guillain-Barré Syndrome. Other neurological disorders such as meningoencephalitis and acute myelitis associated with Zika virus infection have been reported as well. Read more on what WHO is doing to respond to the Zika virus emergency.

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The health and social effects of nonmedical cannabis use

Cannabis is globally the most commonly used psychoactive substance under international control, especially among young people. This is the first report on cannabis since 1997 that presents an update on what we know about the health and social consequences of nonmedical cannabis use as well as the priority areas for future research. Access the publication

New video WHO: Treating and defeating epilepsy in Ghana and Viet Nam
In collaboration with the ministries of health, the WHO Programme on Reducing the Epilepsy Treatment Gap is delivering epilepsy treatment at the grassroots level in four pilot countries: Ghana, Mozambique, Myanmar and Viet Nam. Project teams used a multipronged strategy involving advocacy, community awareness, training, mhGAP resources and health system strengthening. Watch this video to see how the treatment gap was reduced by a third in Ghana and a fifth in Viet Nam. Video link

The WHO/UNDP initiative on harmful use of alcohol, violence and infectious diseases

The harmful use of alcohol, violence and infectious diseases are strongly linked: each of the three issues has a proven relationship to the other two. This is why cross-collaboration between sectors, agencies and countries is key to address them. Read more on the WHO/UNDP initiative to create policy coherence between these 3 areas. Read more

Third edition of Disease Control Priorities on mental, neurological and substance use

The health, social and economic impact of mental, neurological and substance use (MNS) disorders on the well-being of individuals, families and societies is significant, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. The newly published edition of Volume 4 of Disease Control Priorities provides information and evidence on the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of priority interventions for the prevention and treatment of MNS disorders in these countries. Access the publication

World Mental Health Day 2016

On 10th of October 2016, WHO will celebrate World Mental Health Day; the theme of this year covers psychological first aid, a key approach to help people recently exposed to emergencies. WHO’s psychological first aid guide is available in 20 languages.