

Launch of the WHO Pacific Islands Mental Health Network

Port Vila, Vanuatu, 14 March 2007



"This is a great example of collaboration between countries with similar needs to address under-resourced but important health issues."

Dr Catherine Le Galès-Camus
WHO Assistant Director-General for Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health

"We fully support the role that PIMHnet plays in support, advice, training/up-skilling and ongoing encouragement."

Dr Rangiau Fariu
Responsible Clinician, Psychiatry
Cook Islands

"It is our hope that PIMHnet will assist us in advocating for healthier changes in awareness of mental health education, to help our people build a better Fiji tomorrow."

Dr Odille Chang
Principal Medical Officer
Fiji



"New Zealand salutes you. It is exciting that mental health is on the Pacific Health Ministers Meeting agenda. We seek your ongoing support for the network."

Dr David Chaplow
Director of Mental Health
New Zealand

"Palau is excited to work with our regional colleagues and consumers to address the needs, hopes and dreams of persons with mental illness through advocacy, policy, human resource, training, planning and service development."

Dr Sylvia Wally
Chief of the Division Behavioural Health
Bureau of Public Health
Palau

"Ultimately it is the quality of care for people with mental illness that is most important. I see this network providing a tremendous opportunity for us, the Pacific region, to collaborate closely on strategies, legislation and policy."

Sir Peter Barter
Minister of Health
Papua New Guinea

"Fakalofa atu, kia monuina e PIMHnet he Pasifika."

Ms Ketu Fereti
Principal Nursing Officer
Niue

"Vanuatu through its PIMHnet commitment has taken the first few steps in joining rest of the world to combat and curb the rise in mental health morbidities."

Dr Christopher Tari
National Focal Point for Mental Health
Vanuatu



The WHO Pacific Islands Mental Health Network (PIMHnet)

Background

Mental health generally ranks low on the public health agenda in the Pacific, where it is forced to compete for scarce resources and public recognition. Consequently, services often are extremely limited, underfunded, and poorly distributed and staffed. As a result, innovative approaches are needed if we are to improve mental health services, strengthen policies and planning, and provide better treatment and care to all Pacific islanders.

At the meeting of Ministers of Health for the Pacific Island Countries, in March 2005 in Apia, Samoa, the idea of a Pacific mental health network was discussed as a means of overcoming geographical and resource constraints in the field of mental health. With support from New Zealand's Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization consulted with Pacific island countries and areas to analyse the mental health situation in the Region.

A framework for a mental health network was developed and presented to 20 Pacific island countries. Eleven countries provided further input in a series of telephone conferences and in a meeting in Tonga in August 2005. thirteen countries are now active members of the network, each with an officially appointed focal point.



Purpose and priorities of PIMHnet

The WHO Pacific Islands Mental Health Network (PIMHnet) brings together countries that share geographical, social and cultural ties, and also experience similar issues or difficulties in the area of mental health. Working together, network countries are able to draw on collective experience, knowledge and resources in order to promote mental health and develop mental health systems that provide effective treatment and care. The three-year priority areas identified by countries within the network are:

- advocacy for mental health throughout the Pacific and within countries
- human resources and training
- policy, legislation, planning and service development
- access to psychotropic medicines
- research and information.

PIMHnet mode of operation

Participation in the network requires high-level commitment from ministries of health, as well as the official appointment of a country focal point and the development of an in-country team. Network countries are then required to meet on an annual basis to develop workplans to be officially endorsed by their ministers of health. The officially appointed focal point in each country provides coordination and liaison between the PIMHnet members and strategic partners, as well as with the network secretariat and the in-country team. Each in-country team could include mental health clinicians and professionals; those involved in mental health legislation, policy, planning, financing and programme management; nongovernmental organizations and other relevant provider organizations; service users and/or service user organizations; educators, academician and their host institutions in the field of mental health; and representatives from communities and churches, such as elders, leaders and traditional healers.

Countries are being supported by the network secretariat based at the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific and WHO Headquarters and its strategic partners.

Funding of PIMHnet

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