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Mental Health Issues and Challenges in India

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Abstract

Mental illness shrouded by stigma, is the Elephant in the Room here which is finally acknowledged by the society and policy makers. It is undeniably, one of the most precious possessions to be promoted and preserved to the fullest extent. According to World Health Organization (2002), 'health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not simply absence of disease or infirmity.' This definition gives us the complete idea of the healthy life with increase in population, changing life style, unemployment, lack of social support, unemployment, lack of social support and increased insecurity. It is predicted that there would be a substantial increase in number of people suffering from mental illness. Psychologically and socially mental illness is undoubtedly a vital resource for a nation development and its absence, represent a great burden to economic, political and social functioning of any nation.

Introduction

Health is a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being and not merely absence of disease. Reconsidering this world health organization definition, several questions arise in our minds like, 'Can somebody be healthy physically but not mentally and socially? Can there be anybody who is mentally healthy but not socially and physically?'

If we consider these questions the concept of health, comments Broader, there are number of factors which contribute to positive health. These are like spiritual, emotional, vocational, philosophical, cultural, socioeconomic, environmental, educational and nutritional along with physical mental and social dimension. Thus, health is multi-dimensional.

Social Health in general takes in account that every individual is a part of a family of a wider community and it focuses on social and economic conditions and well-being of the whole person in the context of his social network. Mental health refers to the inner harmony of an individual while social health refers to the external harmony of an individual

Issues and Concerns

There are various issues and related factors that contribute to mental illness. These factors vary in the urban and the rural areas. Among priority non-communicable diseases in India and mental illness constitute 26 percent share in the burden of diseases. Available data suggest that there would be a sharp increase in this respect in the coming years, i.e. from 2020-22. Projections suggest that the health burden due to mental disorder, will increase to 15% daily by 2020. With the population increase, changing values, life style, frequent discretional in income, crop failure, natural calamities (drought and flood) economic crisis, unemployment, lack of social support and increasing insecurity have been also increasing. It is fearfully expected that there would be substantial increase in the number of people suffering from mental illness in rural areas.

Considering the fact that 72.2% of population lives in rural areas only, but about 25% of health infrastructure, medical manpower and other health resources, it may be submersed that number of people affected with any mental and behavioral disorder would be higher in rural areas.

Despite NRHM initiatives and improvement, general health services in rural areas are not adequate and people are struggling with infrastructure human resources. In urban areas there is availability of good facilities and technology but today people are totally depending on these technologies more than the normal they used to do. This has caused laziness and bad lifestyle and also increased the mental health problems. The other factors include, stress at work, in compatibility with the great speed of development increasing divorce rate and separation of families and nuclear families.

The present situation and available health service system shows that providing mental health services is a challenging task which needs infrastructural and programming corrections in existing national mental health programme. Lack of trained human resource for mental health care and giving proper treatment is another challenge.

Barriers in Seeking Help

Major Barriers in seeking help are unavailability of mental health services, low literacy and socio culture barriers, traditional and religious belief and stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness. Financial constraints and infrastructure are one of major barriers which need mental services. Other barriers are low political will of central and state governments and unclear plan of action and policy. Another barrier is resistance to decentralization and resistance by mental health professionals and workers whose interest are saved by large hospitals.

Other barrier is that medical students and psychiatric residents are often trained only in mental hospital settings with inadequate training of general health work and lack of infrastructure for supervision in the community. Another important barrier is mental health leadership in the country. That often contributes public health skills.

Innovation attempted so far

Various non-governmental organizations and civil society groups are involved in providing mental health service delivery and community mental health and have done commendable jobs. Most of their services are extension clinics, concentrated in urban areas with little attention in rural areas. Although many NGOS are doing commendable jobs in their areas, their services reach is very limited and dependent on donor support. Secondly their initiatives have been isolated to small pockets with limited funds and not been supported by government both at center and state levels.

It emerges that the NGOs can supplement in providing mental health services but they cannot be an alternative in providing mental health care services in areas that need special care.

Suggestions

Many suggestions or strategies can be used for strengthening the rural mental health care services. Main suggestion include –

1. Convergence of National Mental Health programme or district mental health programme under National Rural Health mission programme and using existing public health center and sub-centers providing mental health services.

2. Capacity building of Rural or registered medical practitioners or primary health care doctors or teaches or *anganvadi* workers on tailor made modules.

3. Advocacy through community, social and other bodies and involvement of religious leaders and teachers local community leaders with key stakeholders.

4. Targeted awareness programme using available media.

5. Provisioning social security to the mentally ill patients.

6. Training for care givers and relatives.

Conclusion

Mental Health is an important component of health and thus for the development of human society all human society not simply that of India but other places too should be helped. There are various mental health services related providing benefits. The rural and urban people both, have problems regarding mental health services which needs immediate attention considering the Burden of diseases and treatment Gap. Lastly the researches reflect that knowledge of the community views and awareness regarding mental health problems and facilities available, are also needed to be considered in planning process

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