



Mental health promotion or public mental health: The time demanded area

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HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, AND MENTAL ILLNESS

The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease, or infirmity” [1-4]. Mental health is clearly an integral part of health and there is no health without mental health [1,4]. Mental health is generally defined as the absence of psychological complaints and mental illnesses [5]. WHO defines mental health as “not just the absence of mental disorder” but “as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community” [1,3,4,6]. Mental health contributes to all aspects of life and has both material and immaterial, or intrinsic, values: For the individual, society, and economy [3]. Mental health has a reciprocal relationship with the well-being and productivity of an individual [3]. Conversely, mental illness, is the “term that refers collectively to all diagnosable mental disorders” that are “health conditions that are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior (or some combination thereof) associated with distress and/or impaired functioning” [1]. Recent arguments suggest that mental illness and mental health are related and can co-occur in an individual [1,3]. The costs of poor mental health have been estimated to account for between 3% and 4% of gross domestic product in developed countries and studies indicate that untreated mental health problems, can have profound longstanding social and economic consequences, including increased contact with the criminal justice system, reduced levels of employment and often lower salaries when employed, and personal relationship difficulties [7]. The compromised quality of life and economic prosperity, is not only through direct costs of health and social services but also due to loss of employment and productivity, and the implementation of mental health promotion (MHP) programs is imperative [8,9]. The high social and economic

costs of poor mental health has contributed to a growing recognition of the need to promote positive mental health and well-being, as well as to prevent the onset of mental illness as promotion and prevention reduce the impacts of poor mental health [7]. The aspect positive mental health contributes to the individual’s well-being and quality of life; and also contributes to society and the economy by increasing functional status and social capital [10]. WHO has recently defined positive mental health in terms of individual’s well-being; effective individual and social functioning. Subjective evaluations of these core components can be termed emotional, psychological, and social well-being [5]. Emotional well-being is the experience of feelings of happiness and satisfaction, whereas psychological well-being refers to leading a meaningful life in which one realizes one’s own capacities; and social well-being refers to the feeling that one values and is valued by the society [5]. In spite of the huge negative impact, mental health issues have been largely neglected in public health agendas and the values of MHP and illness prevention have been underappreciated more than those of physical health to date [2,11]. Fewer studies have focused on developing and testing interventions that primarily aim at enhancing positive mental health [5]. This is in line with that research on mental health has been weighted heavily on psychopathologies and mental illnesses rather than well-being or optimal functioning [11]. Separate strategies from treatment are needed for MHP and prevention of mental illnesses, psychiatrists are not usually accustomed to these concepts and approaches of MHP [11]. However, just as the 1986 Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion shifted greater attention in public health from disease prevention to health promotion, positive psychology shifts attention from pathology and dysfunction to positive emotions and optimal functioning [8]. The Ottawa Charter, as a declaration statement, developed by the WHO, highlighted the goals of MHP; mainly focused on building healthy public policies, creating supportive environments, strengthening community action, developing relevant to mental health personal skills and in general reorienting health services

to early detection of disorders and promotion of health and well-being [1,2,8-10,12]. Similarly, the European Union, formulated Green Paper in 2005, constituting a declaration document of proposals for the establishment of an inclusive strategy on MHP across the European countries [9]. Again, common principles and recommendations for modern MHP were laid by the Melbourne Charter in 2008 providing a framework which recognizes the influence of social and economic determinants on mental health and mental illness, and identifies the contribution that diverse sectors make in influencing the conditions that create or ameliorate positive mental health [13]. The charter stresses that MHP is everybody's concern and responsibility and effective MHP builds on cross-sectoral collaboration with non-health sectors, including education, housing, employment and industry, transport, arts, sports, urban planning and justice [6]. It was stressed that the role of the health sector must move in a health promotion direction, beyond its responsibility for providing clinical and curative services [12]. MHP can be seen as an important new goal for public mental health as because the absence of mental illness does not necessarily imply the presence of flourishing mental health [5].

MHP

As mental health is an integral part of health, MHP is also an integral part of overall health promotion [4]. WHO defines health promotion as “the process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants, and thereby improving their health” [1,12]. It is also defined by O'Donnell as “the science and art of helping people change their lifestyle to move toward a state of optimal health,” which includes physical, emotional, social spiritual, and intellectual health [1]. Again, WHO defined MHP as “the creation of living conditions and environments that support mental health and allow people to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles” [14]. It is widely recognized that promoting mental health and addressing mental ill health can be endeavored at different levels, taking into consideration individual, family, community and social determinants of mental health, and strengthening protective factors while reducing risk factors [9]. Svedberg *et al.*, mentioned that, the essence of MHP is empowerment, together with educational and practical support, provided by means of a good alliance and health care professionals have to provide practical support to patients in their actual life contexts, aimed at encouraging empowerment processes and reducing stigmatization [14]. In many ways, promotion of mental health also overlaps with prevention, yet they are also distinct, in that the emphasis in MHP is on positive mental health and prevention emphasize on the causes of disease [3,11,12,14]. Prevention of illnesses focuses on the causes of risk factors to avoid illness, whereas promotion focuses on health [11]. Health promotion is linked to health and its promotion, associated with interventions and offers a public health practitioner the means by which health can be improved by behavioral changes that require effort from the patient and/or engaging in community based intervention [2,11]. The ideals of health promotion are based on “what causes good health?” and “what factors

or determinants are linked to health and which of these are modifiable” and “how are they modifiable?” [2,11]. This salutogenic approach focuses on factors that support human health and well-being, rather than on factors that cause disease as well as the perspective is broader as compared to the traditional preventive and curative approach [2,11].

PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH

The field of public mental health approaches mental health targets at the population level focuses on enabling and achieving positive mental health [9-12]. Consequently, public mental health is not just about the occurrence and prevention of mental disorders in the population, but also includes the promotion of mental health and wellbeing encompassing the experience, occurrence, distribution of positive mental health and mental health problems and their determinants [9]. This multidisciplinary area of practice aims to enhance well-being and quality of life for individuals, communities and society in general [10]. Promoting mental health is an integral part of public health [3] and public health must focus not only on preventing and treating mental illness but also on promoting mental health by addressing the emotional, social, and psychological well-being of the population [1].

MHP INTERVENTIONS

Interventions might be categorized into universal interventions focusing the whole population; selected interventions focusing the subgroups with significant risks; and indicated intervention focusing high-risk individuals; according to the range of target population, available resources and intervening limitations [11].

Challenges of MHP [13]

- Low sensitivity of in policy making
- Low literacy of people on mental health
- Low intro-sectoral coordination and inter-sectoral cooperation
- Inadequate mental health programs
- Poor quality and in consistency in taking care of chronic diseases
- Poor structure, system process, and resources of mental health system.

Challenges

The greatest importance for mental health care is not only alleviate and reduce mental illness, but also to work actively to promote the mental health of patients [12]. The three kinds of interventions of promotion, prevention, and treatment are interrelated and complementary; however, they are somewhat different from one another and psychiatrists along with public health experts, policy makers and other health professionals need to be competent in prevention of mental illnesses and MHP in various settings [11].

CONCLUSION

The field of MHP has acquired world-wide recognition and new initiatives are being undertaken and new research is emerging globally. It's the time to concentrate appropriately on the issue to improve the mental health as well as to reduce the personal, social, and global burden of mental illness.

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