

PROPOSAL FOR A MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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NEED FOR A MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT IN A HOSPITAL

India's new health policy which calls for recognition of mental disorders and a more accessible and holistic treatment of mental illnesses also pushes for decriminalization of attempted suicide.

Released on the occasion of World Mental Health Day on 10th October 2014, the policy takes a fresh look at the health services being offered for mental illnesses, lays down the guidelines for mental health care, and recommends changes in the law that criminalizes suicide, now considered a major cause of death among people with a mental illness.

Releasing the policy, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said: "The Indian Lunatic Asylum Act, 1858, and Indian Lunacy Act, 1912, ignored the human rights aspect and were concerned only with custodial issues. After Independence, it took 31 years for India to attempt the first enactment, which resulted another nine years later in the Mental Health Act, 1987. But due to many defects, the Act never came into force."

The new policy is backed up by the "Mental Health Action Plan 365" which spells out specific roles for the Centre, States, local bodies and civil society organizations.

"Universal access to mental health care is a specific goal of the government. It would find substantial articulation in the National Health Policy and National Health Assurance Mission," the Minister said.

Stress levels and stress related disorders are on the rise both in terms of the effects on each person and the number of people affected. These include the child appearing for an interview for admission to pre-school, to the adolescent being part of a fragmented social media, to the insecure job-hopping middle aged burnt out executive, to the anxious parent competing with other parents for marks in a board exam. These are some of the glimpses of a society hurtling towards a more stress intensive environment where there would be a need for services related to understanding the mind and its adaptations.

Traditional psychiatry services have tried to tackle these problems but have fallen woefully short. They have only focussed on treating the biological aspects of a problem with the limited psychopharmacological options. The presence of a comprehensive mental health agency to bring about a successful resolution of the situations has been lacking. It is the empirical evidence of this need that gave the impetus to propose setting up of a mental health department as a collaborative effort of professionals working in different areas related to the mind and seeking to find effective ways of enhancing its efficiency.

Proposal to set up a comprehensive mental health services within the hospital setting

Dr. Darshan Shah proposes to set up a comprehensive mental health department to cater to the various mental health needs within a world class hospital.

Psychiatry Services:

A trained psychiatrist would help to cater to the psychiatric needs in a hospital setting. This would include comprehensive psychiatric diagnosis, psychopharmacological treatments, administering various other psychiatric treatments, co-ordination with psychological treatments and opening up a research subunit. Consultation Liaison psychiatry which specializes in the interface between medicine and psychiatry can be effective to help patients with co-morbid medical conditions at the request of the treating medical or surgical consultant. There is also an overlap with psychosomatic medicine, health psychology and neuropsychiatry. Help is provided to inpatients, outpatients, emergency departments, behavioural issues related to medical and surgical conditions, medically unexplained physical symptoms, patients who may not have a psychiatric disorder but are experiencing distress related to their medical problems, patients with dementia and patients who have attempted suicide or self-harm, and long term medical conditions like hypertension and diabetes mellitus.

Psychotherapy Clinic:

This service offers a range of psychotherapeutic services like individual psychotherapy, psychodynamic psychotherapy, supportive psychotherapy, intensive short term dynamic therapy, group therapy, family and couples therapy, and play therapy.

Specialized services offered could be

- (1) Multiple family groups for families of patients of suffering from schizophrenia
- (2) Support groups for terminally ill cancer patients, for rape victim & for victims of childhood sexual abuse
- (3) Psycho education groups for families, friends of severally mentally ill patients
- (4) Groups of adolescents with problems of behaviour - delinquency or conduct disorder
- (5) Psychodynamic psychotherapy groups for people with severe problems outside of the family.
- (6) Day Care Centre for Schizophrenics

Child Development and Assessment Center:

Any assessment of a Child is necessarily incomplete and may actually be grossly inaccurate if it fails to take the development perspective into account.

Because of its inherent complexity, development transcends several disciplines and its complete assessment by a single professional is impossible. Therefore, it is proposed to set up a Multi-disciplinary center with child psychologists, child psychiatrists,

pediatricians, neurologists, speech therapist, audiometrists and occupational therapists, to carry out comprehensive evaluation of children.

Therapeutic Nursery:

It is estimated that there are about 500-1000 children suffering from autism in Ahmedabad and its surrounding areas. The Therapeutic nursery can have objectives of:

1. To diagnose and assess children with autism.
2. To educate the parents of children with autism about the disorder and its treatment.
3. To educate the community about the disorder and the need for early diagnosis and intervention.
4. To treat children with autism both within a group and individually and to co-ordinate the multiple facets of this treatment.
5. To communicate and network with other individuals and organisations, both nationally and internationally, who are involved in the diagnosis and treatment of autism.

There are a panel of experts from various related fields who help and evaluate and assess children referred to the Nursery. The treatment of each child would be decided individually based on his/her need.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

1. Printing and distribution of pamphlets in English, Gujarati and Hindi describing in a simple and brief manner various mental health issues, emotional disorders and their treatments.
2. Mental Health Awareness Week and other related programmes.
3. Suicide Hot lines especially for adolescents during times of exam and exam results.
4. Help lines for people suffering from mental illness.

Parent Counselling Cell:

It aims at dealing with parental concerns about their children and their relationship.

Parent-child relationship is the first bond that the child lives in. Experiences at this level determine how a child relates to others, his attitude, his reaction patterns and his overall personality. This calls for a more enlightened parenting not only as it would affect the child's schooling but also since it would be in the long term interests of the child. When the child steps into adolescence, the age brings along its own peculiar problems for the child as well as the parents. This is the time when parents feel too bewildered, their helplessness compounded by the turbulent swings in the moods and demands of the child. Though adolescence has always been a difficult age, its problems have become exaggerated especially during the last few years owing to the flux in modern culture.

The cell would broadly cover the following areas

- ❖ Problems peculiar to this age
- ❖ Changing relationship with parents, opposition and emotional distance

- ❖ Influence of peer groups, mass media and internet
- ❖ Self-concept, identity crisis and self-esteem
- ❖ Discipline, punishment and behavioural changes
- ❖ Academic performance and preparation for making a career choice
- ❖ Role of the extended family
- ❖ Pushing your child towards independence.

Self-rating scales for parents to make them aware of different aspects of their own personality and how that might be affecting their relationships with children and others.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING

Psychological test is a scientific standardised and objective tool for the measurement of sample of behaviour.

Behaviour of the person is a pathway to access various aspects of his personality and thereby know and understand him better. Close observation and detailed interview have been quite supportive measures for this purpose. Various aspects of the personality and behaviour of the person can also scientifically be measured. A tool to measure the various aspects of behaviour in a scientific, objective, standardised & organised way is known as Psychological Testing.

Intelligence Tests

- Malin's Intelligence Scale for Indian Children (MISIC)
- Wechsler's Adult Performance Scale of Intelligence (WAPIS-form PR)
- Binet Kamat Test Of Intelligence (BKT)
- Seguin Form Board (SFB)

Developmental Scales

- Vineland's Social Maturity Scale (VSMS)
- Developmental Screening Test (DST)

Psychiatric Scales

- Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS)

Specific Learning disability Test

Psychiatric Scales:

Various objective psychiatric scales help to assess different types of mental disorders and quantify the pathology, thus aiding in better understanding of the disorder, its prognosis and help in chalking out better treatment plans. This includes autism assessment and neuropsychological assessment.

Personality Tests:

With unstructured and ambiguous or semi-structured stimulus, the subject gets to express a part of his desires, beliefs, attitudes, and view of life on to turn which helps

to bring out the internal structure of the personality, which would aid in a better understanding of self.

Vocational & Occupational Tests:

Job satisfaction, successful career, higher achievements and progress of a person in educational life or career depends quite a lot on that person's interest, aptitude and various other personality factors. Vocational and Occupational scales / tests help us to identify these personal factors, used further better guidance.