



Workshop on Community Mental Health Programme

Introduction

Community mental health refers to the application of specialized knowledge to a specific population or community for the purpose of promoting and maintaining mental health as well as rehabilitating populations at risk who remain affected by mental illness. Mental health is an integral component of health, which is defined as a positive state of well-being (physical, mental and social) rather than simply the absence of illness. To ensure the availability and accessibility of minimum mental health care in the foreseeable future, particularly to the most vulnerable and underprivileged sections of society, the Community Mental Health programme was initiated. It is the goal of the Community Mental Health program to promote the application of mental health knowledge to general health care and social development, and to promote community involvement in the development of mental health services, as well as to stimulate efforts toward self-help in the community.

Fieldwork in social work plays an integral role in this context, as it allows practitioners to directly engage with communities, identify specific needs, and design tailored interventions designed to address unique mental health issues. As a result of fieldwork experience, social workers are able to build a sense of trust in communities, which facilitates communication and collaboration between mental health services and community members. Moreover, social workers may be able to advocate for systemic changes and resource allocation that further support the mental health and well-being of underserved groups through fieldwork. In this regard, the Department of Social Work-PG at St. Edmund's College conducted a one-day workshop on Community Mental Health on 20th May 2024 in collaboration with the District Mental Health Programme of East Khasi Hills District.



Objective of the workshop

1. To enhance participants' understanding of mental health.
2. To increase awareness of mental health services among participants.
3. To identify various intervention strategies that social workers can use to assist the community to gain access to mental health services.

Resource Person: Mr. Truman Elias Basaiawmait, Psychologist, District Mental Health Programme, East Khasi Hills District, MIMHANS.

Key Sessions and Learnings

Session 1: Understanding Mental Health

- **Mental Health:** Defined by WHO as a state of well-being.
- **Challenges:** Stigma, discrimination, invisible nature of illness.
- **Types of Mental Illness:** Psychosis, neurosis, child and adolescent disorders, substance use disorder.
- **Common Symptoms:** Physical, psychological, thinking, behavioral, and imagining symptoms.

Session 2: Community Mental Health

- **Definition:** Application of specialized knowledge to promote and maintain mental health in communities.
- **Community Organization:** Method of social work for community problem-solving.
- **Key Factors:** Population, socioeconomic status, education, service accessibility, cost-effectiveness, community sensitivity, belief systems.
- **Scope:** Mental health promotion, stigma removal, psychosocial support, rehabilitation, substance use harm prevention, treatment, and self-help groups.



Session 3: Pathway to Care and Recovery

- **Objectives:** Understand and develop pathways to care, refer and guide patients.
- **Mental Healthcare Act (MHCA):** Clinical decisions for admission and rights of homeless persons with mental illness.
- **Care Pathway Examples:** Assessing severity, treating serious or trivial illness.
- **Case Study:** Woman receiving treatment at MIMHANS, exploring dimensions of recovery.
- **Handling Trauma:** Understanding trauma, its characteristics, and internalizing experiences.

Activities and Discussions

- **Activity 1:** Discussed concerns and misconceptions about mental health in Meghalaya.
- **Activity 2:** Group discussion on identifying and addressing mental disorders in families/communities.
- **Activity 3:** Mapped pathways to care for specific cases, identifying challenges.
- **Activity 4:** Differentiated between emotions and behaviors, listed examples.

Feedback from Participants:

The workshop on Community Mental Health Programme was highly informative and provided a deeper understanding of mental health challenges and solutions. Participants found the sessions led by Mr. Truman Elias Basaiawmait very clear and engaging, especially the explanations of mental health issues, stigma, and the role of social workers in addressing these challenges. The activities, such as group discussions and case studies, helped participants connect the topics to real-life situations and encouraged active participation.

Attendees appreciated the focus on promoting mental health awareness in the community and learning about the importance of pathways to care and recovery. The practical examples shared during the workshop, such as the Mental Healthcare Act and handling trauma, gave them



valuable insights into supporting individuals and families facing mental health issues. Many participants highlighted the importance of applying this knowledge to create accessible and effective mental health interventions in their communities.

The workshop inspired participants to take an active role in raising awareness and addressing mental health challenges. It equipped them with practical tools and strategies to support vulnerable groups and advocate for better resources and systemic changes. The event was a meaningful step toward improving community mental health and empowering social workers to make a positive impact.

Conclusion

The workshop provided student social workers with Mental Health Education, enabling them to understand mental illness and its role in society. They recognized the need to raise more awareness about mental health, especially in schools and colleges. The knowledge gained will help them design and implement effective community mental health interventions and advocate for necessary systemic changes.

The one-day workshop equipped the participants with a comprehensive understanding of mental health concepts and the importance of integrating mental health services within community settings. In addition to increasing awareness about the availability of mental health services, participants also gained an understanding of the important role that social workers play in facilitating access to these services. Furthermore, the workshop highlights a number of intervention strategies that social workers may be able to employ in order to alleviate mental health challenges within communities, thus enhancing the mental well-being of vulnerable and underprivileged individuals. By the end of the workshop, participants are capable of implementing effective mental health interventions and advocating for the necessary resources and systemic changes to support community mental health initiatives.



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Signatures of HOD and organizer