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Parents' perception of child and adolescent mental health problems and their choice of treatment option in southwest Ethiopia

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Objective: This study was aimed at assessing the perception of parents about psychiatric illness of children and adolescents and their preferred treatment options in Jimma, Ethiopia.

Method: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 532 parents in Jimma City, Ethiopia from April to May 2013. Parents were invited to assess their knowledge on manifestations and causes of psychiatric illness in children and adolescents as well as their preferred treatment options if their children exhibited signs and symptoms of mental illness.

Results: Externalizing behavioral symptoms like "stealing from home, school or elsewhere" and internalizing symptoms like "being nervous in new situations and easily loses confidence" were perceived by 60.9 and 38.2% of the parents, respectively. Magic, curse and sin were mentioned as causes of mental health problems by 93.2%, 81.8% and 73.9% of the parents, respectively. Nearly three quarters of the parents identified genetic factors while approximately 20 % of them mentioned neuro-chemical disturbance as possible causes of their children's mental health problems. The majority (92.7 %) of parents agreed that they would seek treatment either from religious or spiritual healers if their children developed mental illness.

Conclusions: The level of awareness about externalizing symptoms is high. Treatment options are at best developed within the context of classrooms. Preference for traditional treatment options might present significant challenges to utilization of child and adolescent mental health services in this population. Public health intervention programs targeting parental understanding of child and adolescent mental health problems need to be designed and evaluated for their effectiveness in low-income settings. Cooperation with religious and spiritual leaders should also be established.

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Achieving mental health and wellness with a unique model; basic needs model for mental health and development in Ghana

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Basic Needs-Ghana implements the model for mental health and development in Ghana where the model's string focus on community mental health is being developed to promote access to mental health treatment services. In addition to developing community based treatment services, the model also emphasizes social and economic empowerment of women, men and youth with mental illness to enable them become active participants in their communities. Alongside public awareness raising and policy influencing mental health care treatment services have been integrated into general health care at the Primary Health Care (PHC) level in Ghana. This is a significant experience by Basic Needs-Ghana that we seek to share with stakeholders in mental health as widely as possible. This presentation traces the significant milestones of promoting and integrating mental health care in to general health care, social welfare and related pro-poor/social protection schemes to help women, men and youth with mental illness live and work successfully in their families and communities. It is an example of successful approach to achieving health and wellbeing of poor and vulnerable people in resource constraint settings, particularly in an environment where formal mental health care was overwhelming institutionalized. The objectives of this presentation are to document significant successes and challenges in the processes to engagements to developing community mental health, to stimulate and motivate actors in the mental health policy and services development in their efforts and set basis for further research into potentials, benefits and challenges of developing community mental health care systems.

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