

14th World Congress on
PSYCHIATRIC & MENTAL HEALTH NURSING
&
5th World Congress on
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING
July 25-26, 2018 | Vancouver, Canada

Challenges in initiating and supporting vocational training for persons with mental illness in India

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The National Mental Health Survey (2014-2016), one of the largest mental health “Research and Action” oriented study undertaken in recent times across 12 states of India reported a high weighted lifetime prevalence of 5.25 in depressive disorders and 1.41 in severe mental illness (n=34802). The WHO also states that by the year 2020, Depression will be the most prevalent condition in the world. With this high rise in NCDs (Non-communicable diseases), a large proportion of people with mental illness also have co-existing medical conditions such as obesity, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, etc. adding the disability. In this background, there exists a high level of stigma towards this illness. Individuals with mental illness recover better with lesser relapse rates when they are engaged in work. Symptoms, medications side effects and other skills deficits such as cognitive/social/assertive/communication skills can interfere with getting and maintaining a job. At a premier mental health institute in South India, a nurse-led initiative in a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) faced several challenges in initiating and maintaining a vocation training café named as the ROSes Café (Recovery Oriented Services). A caregiver who trained persons with mental illness (supervised by the MDT) in various stages commencing with cleaning vegetables, dishes, etc. and going up to account management operated the café. Interested persons with mental illness were invited to be part of this venture. Initial grading was done based on their competencies. Behavioral strategies such as re-enforcement were used as part of the training process. Challenged faced were many ranging from getting space, an instructor, administrative support, funding, etc. The onus was the instructor’s (caregiver) and the team’s satisfaction, placement of the recovering individuals and increasing popularity of this venture.

Biography

Dr Sailaxmi Gandhi is an Additional Professor & Head, Department of Nursing at NIMHANS (National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences) which is an INI (Institute of National Importance) at Bengaluru, India. She has 32 yrs. Of service in nursing and is the recipient of the prestigious President’s award of the Best Nursing Teacher in 2014 bestowed in the Rashtrapathi Bhavan, New Delhi on International Nurses Day as well as various other awards such as the Dr Radha Krishnan Gold Medal Award for ‘Excellence in individual achievements & National Development, by Global Economic Progress & Research Association in 2012. She is a PhD and post-graduate guide and a nursing consultant in the psychiatric rehabilitation services as well as the adult psychiatry unit V. She has published many articles in PubMed and other indexed journals as well as books, the most recent being a book on ‘ADL for Persons with Mental Illness: A Book for Caregivers’. Her areas of interest are occupational stress and stress management programs, school mental health, psychiatric rehabilitation, holistic well-being, suicide prevention and maternal and infant mental health.

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