Why the Eye: Innovative Mental Health Approaches

Keynote Presentation

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Mental health and visual impairment

• Increased prevalence of mental conditions in people losing vision or with vision loss
  • Mainly common mental conditions, some other symptoms
  • Widely varying prevalence of comorbidity in research

• Better mental health improves not only quality of life, but social and physical outcomes
  • Increase in physical problems in people with MH diagnosis
Mental health and visual impairment 2

• Mechanisms
  • A grief reaction
  • Profound change in lifestyle, self-sufficiency and functioning
    • Loss of employment, social role, status
    • Biological mechanisms

• Coping and resilience

- Structural equation modelling indicates the effect of Disability on Mental Distress largely mediated by Social Exclusion
Why are the links between eye care, stigma and mental health important?

➢ To ensure health programmes meet people’s needs
➢ To improve social and health outcomes
➢ Ensure services receive the resources they deserve for comprehensive approaches to be delivered

To support people to thrive!
Integrating into existing systems

Targeting key stakeholders

Community anti-stigma work

Linking to specialist services

Accessible treatment/therapeutic skills in local services

Recognising mental ill health and comm skills

Lancet 2008, after Alma Ata
Mental health, stigma, and neglected tropical diseases: A review and systematic mapping of the evidence

Mirja Koschorke¹, Yasmin Hussain Al-Haboubi²,³, Po-Chang Tseng⁴, Maya Semrau⁵ and Julian Eaton²,⁶*
Key messages

- Priority for people affected
- Should be part of comprehensive programming
- Negative impact on overall outcomes, and prognosis
- We can intervene at different points in the cycle
Key considerations

Integrated within front-line services

Mainstreaming and referral

Think beyond the individual to care-givers, especially for children

Mental health care and stigma work are linked, but draw on distinct evidence-based interventions
1. Community level care

- Anti-stigma activities during field work.
- Link to holistic health promotion activities
- Links to peer support groups for social support
Mobilise communities
2. Individual treatment and support

- Prevention and promotion, including addressing community-based stigma
- Early identification and initial treatment within eye care services. Group and peer-based support
- Referral to appropriate mental health care where needed. Link to other services for livelihoods etc

Early identification
- Give front line workers skills to recognise mental health issues and know next steps for referral
- Lay and peer counselling following training

Link people together
3. Linking with specialist services and other sectors

- Prevention and promotion, including addressing community-based stigma
- Early identification and initial treatment within NTD services. Group and peer-based support
- Referral to appropriate mental health care where needed. Link to other services for livelihoods etc.

Ensure access to specialist support where needed

- Primary care-based treatment interventions (for general clinicians)
- Link to mental health services (for referral and supervision)

Improve liaison between wider health and mental health systems
The move to a more inclusive world

- Building a movement across interest groups is key
  - Vision 2020 and NTD work
- Translate research to WHO endorsed guidance

- Part of a growing recognition of holistic care that we can capitalize on!
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