

Guest Editorial

Public Mental Health: A Way Forward for Health Delivery Systems

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Abstract

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Introduction

Mental well-being is the state of mental health that allows people to cope with the stresses of life. Mental well-being also improves individual's capabilities by adding remarkable value to day-to-day functioning. General health depends on good physical health, but mental health is also necessary to enhance life quality and the ability to handle life's ups and downs. Good mental health plays a significant part in improving physical wellbeing, enhancing social equalities and promoting healthy lifestyles. It is a pity that despite progress in understanding the impacts & consequences, and required service patterns for mental disorder, mental illnesses are still presenting an alarming challenge to global health. The WHO's 2022 report emphasizes how much importance people, communities, and governments should place on mental health and how all stakeholders in all sectors must match that value with dedication, participation, and investment.¹ Although mental health conditions contribute to millions of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs),^{2,3} these get less attention from health systems getting approximately two percent or even less spending on healthcare by governments

around the world.

Mental well-being provides safeguards against unhealthy lifestyle choices and inequality in society. Nowadays, there are a lot of evidence-based strategies for managing mental illness and fostering mental wellness through prevention. Promoting mental wellbeing is an important social objective since it helps equitable society and healthy lifestyles. There is a consensus that mental health conditions contribute to the global burden of diseases, but the interventions to treat and prevent such conditions are not given due attention. The full scope of these issues must be brought to the attention of policymakers in order to increase funding for promotion & prevention of mental health disorders as a crucial part of health policies and professional training.

Prioritizing mental health calls for investments and initiatives to support wellbeing.⁴ It is well acknowledged that mental health may be a determinant and consequence of physical health, social adversities and difficulties of living. Before the age of 25, three-quarters of lifetime mental health problems start & according to studies, today's young persons are thought to have worse mental health outcomes than those of previous generations.⁵ It is therefore important that due attention should be given to children and adolescents by offering the greatest opportunity for both prevention and early treatment of mental disorder during their early life periods.



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Public mental health is an approach that is fundamental to physical wellbeing & is viewed as an approach focusing on population to improve coverage, outcomes and coordination of interventions provided by different services.⁶ Public mental health approach is linked to promoting mental wellbeing. The art and science of improving mental health and wellbeing and preventing mental illnesses are achieved through collaborative efforts and well-informed decisions made by society, organizations, communities, and individuals.⁷

The objectives of public mental health are to stop mental disorders from developing, prevent the negative effects and disparities that come with them, encourage resilience and mental health, and assist in the delivery of effective treatments for mental disorders. If efforts are kept apart from current public health programs and the tenets of public health actions, progress in promoting mental health and preventing mental illnesses is unlikely to be made. Public mental health's task is supported by current evidence for effective, fair, and sustainable optimistic outcome to reducing the burden of mental disorders and promoting population mental wellbeing.⁸

Mental illnesses account for a high prevalence and investments in appropriate mental health interventions including preventive strategies could help individuals reclaim years of healthy life.⁹ By fostering mental wellness and treating mental disorders and their related effects, effective interventions are available to prevent mental disorders. Similarly, current literature supports the long-term effects of public mental health interventions. The essential part of such interventions revolves around preventing mental disorders from arising, promoting resilience and advocating for healthy living. There is evidence that such approaches are cost effective, implementable and importantly helping people with mental illnesses for living with several social & economic benefits. Economic evaluations of numerous PMH interventions consistently show a financial return on investments for such programmes, even in the short term.¹⁰

Public health approach can accomplish the goals of enhancing mental wellbeing and reducing the social and personal costs of mental illness. Improvements in income and education, along with improvements in housing, sanitation, water supply, nutrition, and hygiene, are contributing to the population's increased health gains. These are also the outcome of new understandings of the causes, prevention, and treatment of illness as well as the implementation of laws that have increased the accessibility of public health intervention programs. It is hoped that future policies will examine various

approaches to promote good health, prevent illness and disability, and treat and rehabilitate those who are affected in order to improve their mental health within a public health framework.¹¹ All these are required and are complement to each other and are not a substitute for the other.

Public mental health guidelines, recommendations and societal initiatives can effectively promote mental health so it is recommended that mental health should be perceived and practiced as public mental health. There is a growing body of empirical research in this field that shows how effective various programs and interventions are in improving population mental health.¹² While poor mental well-being adds additional difficulties, effective public mental health interventions can minimise these effects. It is hoped that public mental health will have an important role in overcoming the burden of diseases with noticeable benefits, sustainable developments and recovery approaches in mental health.

In Pakistan, there is a high prevalence of stigma, ignorance about mental health, and discrimination against people with mental illnesses.¹³ Compared to the population's needs, there aren't many qualified mental health professionals or specialized services available.¹⁴ This suggests that many Pakistanis' mental health needs go unmet. The World Health Organization launched the Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) in 2009, and it is understandable that Pakistan is still having difficulty meeting its targets due to a lack of mental health literacy, limited and underdeveloped services, accessibility issues like cost and location, and persistent structural issues.¹⁵ Globally, mental health is becoming a more important priority in health policies and Pakistan must prioritize mental health just as urgently.

Conclusions

Given the foregoing, it is evident that Pakistan urgently needs primary strategies for public mental health, which are currently lacking. It will take a lot of time and persistent work to confront and change deeply ingrained systemic problems like poverty, violence, and harmful cultural practices. Still, efforts must be made. Primary strategies should not be overlooked, even though secondary and tertiary public mental health strategy planning and execution are encouraged. It takes a coordinated and coordinated effort from mental health professionals, other healthcare professionals, government and non-governmental charity organizations, schools, workplaces, and society at large to implement primary strate-

gies successfully.

Competing Interest:

The authors declared no competing interest.

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