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# NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME

## HEADLINES

- 01** National Mental Health Campaign for World Health Day 2017: “Depression: Let’s Talk about it, to get out of it”
- 02** Promoting quality mental health services that ensure the protection of human rights: training on the Quality Rights Toolkit
- 03** Building the capacity of Emergency Room Staff on psychiatric emergencies: additional trainings and evaluation
- 04** E-mental health guided self-help service provision pilot project: an update
- 05** Nature podcast on global mental health
- 06** Recent publications on mental health in Lebanon

## National Mental Health Campaign for World Health Day 2017: “Depression: Let’s Talk about it, to get out of it”

On the occasion of the World Health Day on April 7, 2017, two important awareness campaigns were launched in Lebanon: the national mental health campaign for World Health Day 2017 by the Ministry of Public Health of Lebanon and the regional campaign for World Health Day for the Eastern Mediterranean Region by the World Health Organisation (WHO); both around the globally chosen theme for this day: Depression. The media covered launching ceremony was held at the Grand Serail under the patronage of the president of the council of ministers H.E. Mr. Saad Hariri.



During the ceremony, H.E Minister of Public Health Mr. Ghassan Hasbani stressed that mental health is a critical issue as there is no health without mental health. He emphasized that mental health is a priority on the agenda of the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH).

The MOPH’s vision for mental health and the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP)’s scope of work, in addition to the major achievements so far in line with the different domains of the National Mental Health Strategy were featured in a documentary accessible on the MOPH Youtube channel: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPK8Xv8B\\_rg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPK8Xv8B_rg)

Mr. Mahmoud Fikhri, WHO regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, highlighted that Lebanon has made great strides in scaling up the provision of mental health care, which led to its selection for the launching of the regional WHO campaign for World Health Day 2017 on depression.



In his testimonial, Mr. Mahmoud Kebbi Halabi shared lessons learned from his own experience with mental disorder, with a clear message: “The first step is to talk”; “I stand here today, not for sorrow or sympathy, but as a proof that you can lead a normal life with mental illness”. He invited people to speak up about what they are going through and to seek help: “To everyone hearing my speech, be the support, be that friend, be that advocate! Mental health concerns us all”.

### Depression as the main theme of the campaign

Depression was chosen to be the focus of this year’s campaign in line with the global theme chosen for World Health Day 2017. Mental disorders are the leading cause of years lived with disability worldwide (22.9%), with depressive disorders being the single largest contributor accounting alone for 10% of years lived with disability globally.

The National Mental Health Campaign 2017 aims to increase the awareness of the general public about depression and its symptoms and to encourage people who are experiencing these symptoms to practice evidence-based self-care techniques, or to seek help if needed.

A key message the campaign aims to transmit is that depression is a health condition that requires attention. Like all mental disorders, depression is for the vast majority of persons a transient condition that will pass. With proper care and support, a person with depression can go back to their usual life in a matter of weeks.

### Campaign components

The campaign consists of multiple components:

- Awareness video that was broadcast on all local TV and radio channels and on social media.
- Posters and informational brochures distributed across all Lebanon in Primary Health Care Centres, pharmacies, hospitals, universities and among organisations in the national Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Task Force.
- List of service providers for referral (including primary healthcare centres trained on mhGAP, community-based mental health centres, and participating university hospitals)

All the above material is available on the MOPH website on the following link:

<http://www.moph.gov.lb/en/Pages/011830/national-mental-health-campaign-2017>

The NMHP in partnership with the World Health Organisation and funded by the European Union held a series of training workshops on Psychiatric Emergencies for Emergency Room (ER) staff in public and private hospitals across Lebanon between August and December 2016. These two-days training workshops aimed at increasing the capacity of the ER staff in managing psychiatric emergencies. In January 2017, additional training workshops were conducted to reach the ER staff who could not attend the trainings held in 2016. In total, staff from around 117 hospitals were trained of which 67 were doctors and 144 were nurses in addition to 8 residents from different universities.

The trainings were followed by an evaluation study to:

- Assess the ease of application and acceptability of the psychiatric emergency management guidelines,
- Identify the degree of utilization of the different components,
- Explore the views and perspective of the doctors and nurses on obstacles and/or barriers for application and on factors conducive to the application of the guidelines.

This evaluation was done through a qualitative study design based on Focus Group Discussions with the doctors and nurses that participated in the training and on observations through field visits to hospital emergency departments. 15 hospitals chosen from different governorates were visited and all participants in the trainings were contacted to take part of the focus group discussions that took place in Beirut, Bekaa and North.

**02****Building the capacity of Emergency Room Staff on psychiatric emergencies: additional trainings and evaluation (cont.)**

The results of this evaluation reveal the importance of the training on psychiatric emergencies that was conducted, through the high appreciation of the participants. The topic itself was perceived as responsive to a daily need that is faced by the participants in their work. The training format itself was highly appreciated, in particular the interactive methodology adopted to deliver the content which was concise and practical. A few suggestions were formulated by some participants to further improve the format of the training.

The training inspired some actions and initiatives within some hospitals to implement the psychiatric emergencies guidelines. Most of the participants in the training are willing to contribute to the sustainable integration of the guidelines in the processes of the ER.

**03****Promoting quality mental health services that ensure the protection of human rights: training on the Quality Rights Toolkit**

The National Mental Health Programme has initiated work on improving the quality of care at institutions that provide mental health services, in line with the “Mental Health and Substance Use Strategy for Lebanon 2015-2020”. With the support of the World Health Organization (WHO) and with funding from the European Union, the NMHP conducted a training workshop in March 2017 on the WHO Quality Rights toolkit which aims at improving quality of care and ensuring that human rights standards are put in place in mental health and social care facilities and empower organisations to advocate for the rights of persons with mental and psychosocial disabilities. The toolkit, which is based on the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, establishes key standards that need to be met in all facilities. Around 15 persons participated in the training workshop which was held as a first step towards the formation of a national team of assessors on the quality rights in mental health and social care facilities.

A stakeholder discussion meeting was also conducted on March 14 with around 50 participants from INGOs, ministries and hospitals. The meeting included a presentation of the Quality Rights project and a discussion among stakeholders on its components and considerations for implementation.

**04****E-mental health guided self-help service provision pilot project: an update**

The National Mental Health Programme at the Ministry of Public Health in partnership with WHO and Fondation d'Harcourt are developing an internet based self-help intervention aimed at addressing the mental health needs of people living in adversities in Lebanon and experiencing emotional difficulties. The evidence-based intervention uses behavioral activation as a main therapeutic approach to treat depression symptoms primarily and constitutes the first step of a stepped care model in Lebanon which aims to increase access to evidence-based treatment using a cost-effective approach. This project is in line with objective 2.1.7 of the “Mental Health and Substance Use Strategy for Lebanon 2015-2020”: “To adapt and pilot an e-mental health guided self-help programme for Lebanon”.

The content of the intervention was developed and tested with the community through cognitive interviewing. Feedback was generated from experts, front line workers and service users from the Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian nationalities in different Primary Healthcare Centers (PHCs). An adaptation workshop was held in February 2017 to discuss the findings from the cognitive interviewing. The workshop was attended by focal persons from the NMHP team, WHO Geneva and Lebanon, University of Zurich, International Medical Corps, War Child Holland Head Office and Lebanon Office, and the American University of Beirut. A three days planning meeting took place in February 2017 and was attended by all the project counterparts to ensure transparency and a participatory approach. Decisions and amendments pertaining to the study protocol, the recruitment outlets, the overall implementation plan and the content of the intervention were voted upon and finalized by all stakeholders. The final decisions and updates were then presented to the directors of the PHCs and Hospitals recruited in the study, during a stakeholder session following the meeting, to ensure transparency and informed participation.

The intervention is currently being culturally adapted and will be piloted in October 2017.

**05****Nature podcast on global mental health**

Mental health disorders touch rich and poor, young and old, in every country around the world. In the first episode of an audio show published by Nature Journal in collaboration with Grand Challenges, three experts, including Dr. Rabih El Chammy, head of the National Mental Health Programme at the MOPH in Lebanon, discuss the evidence for interventions, how to get help to the right people, and which challenge, if solved, would help the most. In addition to discussing the priorities in global mental health, Dr. Chammy highlights the work being done by the MOPH in reforming the mental health system in Lebanon.

The podcast is accessible on through the MOPH website on the following link:  
<http://www.moph.gov.lb/en/Pages/6112033/nature-podcast-global-mental-health>

**Karam, E.; El Chammay, R.; Richa, S.; Naja, W.; Fayyad, J. and Ammar, W. Lebanon:** Mental health system reform and the Syrian crisis. British Journal of Psychiatry.

This article provides an overview of the mental health situation in Lebanon amidst the Syrian crisis. Research involving refugees conducted in Lebanon since the onset of the Syrian crisis points to a clear increase in mental disorders in the young and adult Syrian refugee population in association with that crisis. At the policy level, despite the great strain on its health system, Lebanon has undertaken a reform of the mental health system through the implementation of a 5-year national mental health strategy which aims at improving the opportunities for better mental health and wellbeing for all persons living in Lebanon, regardless of nationality. Stable funding and research are still needed to ensure successful implementation. Nonetheless, other key social determinants, such as conflict and war, must be addressed by the international community as major factors leading to the poor mental health of the population.

*All NMHP newsletters are accessible on the NMHP webpage on the MoPH website on the following link: <http://www.moph.gov.lb/en/Pages/6/553/the-national-mental-health-program>*



**Contact**

mentalhealth@moph.gov.lb

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