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The Ghana project in psychiatry: A systematic description of the mental health services

Michael Atakora
UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Abstract

Mental health is a neglected field within the health care system in Ghana. Public education and interventions focusing on mental health remain low, leading to poor knowledge and awareness of mental health services in the population.

The overall aim of this study was to provide a systematic description of mental health services in Ghana focusing on mental health resources and organization and use of mental health services, decentralization, and differentiation of mental health services as well as possible intervention to improve mental health service delivery.

A cross-sectional study was conducted, and the sample study participants were selected through snowball technique. A total of 42 mental health professionals from six hospitals were chosen for interviews. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The data was coded and theme-based analysis were done. Major findings of this study include inadequate human and material resources; poor knowledge of mental health in the population; weak coordination between general practitioners and mental health professionals; inadequate mental health services in schools and prisons. Additionally, 54.8% of respondents reported limited mental health educational materials, and most schools (54.8%) lacked trained resident mental health professionals. The main interventions for service delivery are taking over activities of daily living by nurses, problem assessment, and psychological interventions which achieved the same results (69%). Consultation of faith-based healers and prayer camps; a lack of mental health research capacity, specifically research focusing on policies; and weakness in the organization and decentralization of mental health services in Ghana are among the common challenges to seeking care.

Improving and strengthening collaboration, capacity building and skills of mental health professionals is important to improving mental health service. Capacity research focusing on dissemination and implementation of mental health policies can serve as the basis for addressing mental health challenges and improving service delivery in Ghana.

Biography

I am Specialist Public Health Physician (DrPH). Currently, my Ph.D. Project at UiT The Arctic University of Norway aimed at improving mental health service delivery in Ghana. My expertise includes Mental Health, Reproductive Health, and Health Systems Analysis. For the past five years, I have offered a unique blend of leadership, vision, and knowledge to hospital in Ghana and in Africa. Also, I have been assisting undergraduate and master students in their thesis and offering community mental health education campaigns for the past four years. My clinical experience includes Psychiatry, Family Planning, and Infectious Disease Management. I have Teaching and Health Management and Administration experience in hospital and educational institutions. I have extensive travel experience across Africa, Asia, Europe, and South/North America. I am currently advocating for the inclusion of mental health into the educational curriculum of Ghana and the construction of a Psychiatric Unit to improve community mental health services in Tafo Government, Kumasi-Ghana. As a young researcher, I have 4 publications to my credit with 5 papers yet to published. Currently, I have served as a reviewer for journals like the Occupational Diseases and Environmental Medicine (ODEM) under Scientific Research Publishing and International Journal of Health and Safety (IJOSH).