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Mental Hygiene to Mental Health – A Mental Health Promotion Workshop

This workshop will spend the first half of the allocated time discussing the following:

1. An overview of mental health promotion policy/strategies and terminology developed over the last two decades (presented by Gillian Church);
2. The history of the Mental Health Association's mental health promotion activities since 1932 (presented by Elizabeth Priestley);
3. Current mental health promotion activities and directions (presented by Rosemary Dickson).

The second half of the workshop will be spent in discussing ideas for future innovative mental health promotion activities in the non-government sector. We hope that you will be able to tell us what you are doing now, where your agency fits into the spectrum, and what you would like to do in the future.

What is mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention?

Promotion

Mental health promotion is an "action to maximise mental health and wellbeing among populations and individuals" (Australian Health Ministers, Mental Health Statement of Rights and Responsibilities, 1991)

We are more familiar with other kinds of health promotion activities, such as

- Quit smoking;
- Slip, slop, slap;
- Exercise, you don't have to take it seriously, just regularly; and
- AIDS campaigns.

What they all have in common is that they take a universal health promotion approach – they are aimed at the general population or significant parts of it who are particularly at risk e.g. smokers, sunbathers, sedentary people, gays and injecting drug users.

By the same token, people in the community are targeted by mental health promotion, eg stress reduction, mentally healthy workplaces etc. They are all about prevention of illness.

Prevention

Prevention is commonly defined as "interventions that occur before the initial onset of a disorder" to prevent the development of disorder (Mrazek & Haggerty 1994, p. 23).

Early intervention

Early intervention refers to interventions targeting people displaying the early signs and symptoms of a mental health problem or mental disorder and people developing or experiencing a first episode of mental disorder.

Setting the policy scene

Following is a list of international and national milestone documents:

- The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion - 1986
- The Jakarta Declaration - 1997
- 2nd National Mental Health Plan – 1998
- National Action Plan for Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health – 2000 and
- Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health - Monograph – 2000
- NSW Framework document (Centre for Mental Health – Prof Beverley Raphael and Kym Scanlon) – 1996

The Second National Mental Health Plan specifically nominated promotion/prevention as one of its three new priority areas. The National Action Plan was developed as part of the strategy and has become a key document in mental health promotion, along with the Monograph.

The Mental Health Intervention Spectrum



Source: adapted from Mrazek & Haggerty (1994).

Adapted from Mrazek and Haggerty 1994, the mental health intervention spectrum has been adopted by Australian governments as a guiding principle in mental health promotion. It shows that mental health promotion straddles prevention, early intervention, treatment and continuing care. A criticism is that recovery is not included in the spectrum.

Risk and protective factors

The identification of risk factors is important in the population health model. These factors include the following:

- Income;
- Social status;
- Physical environments;
- Education and education settings;
- Working conditions;
- Social environments;
- Families;
- Biology and genetics;

- Personal health practices and coping skills;
- Sport and recreation;
- Availability of opportunities; and
- Access to health services.

Risk factors are defined as “those characteristics, variables, or hazards that, if present for a given individual make it more likely that this individual, rather than someone selected at random from the general population, will develop a disorder”(Mrazek & Haggerty).

Protective factors are defined as “those factors that produce a resilience to the development of psychological difficulties in the face of adverse risk factors” (Spence).

Strategies in place now

Strategies in place now to address these risk factors include:

- Positive parenting – looks at improving family dynamics;
- School Link – links schools with mental health services;
- Mind Matters - mental health promoting schools; and
- Support groups – encourage social interaction and engagement for people with a mental disorder (or in the wider community other issues such as cancer, stroke) and improve mental health literacy.

The NSW Association for Mental Health and Health Promotion

Historical perspective

1932

The NSW Association for Mental Health started its life as the Council for Mental Hygiene. Mental health promotion was not a term in common usage in 1932 but in effect, that was the reason for the Council’s beginning.

In an article written at the time it was noted that “8% of the children in ordinary schools presented some problems that called for some form of guidance”. Not so different from the comments we see written today.

1956

- 12,000 men, women and children were in mental hospitals in NSW;
- One third of all people in hospital were in mental hospitals;
- In one of the Association’s publications of that year it was noted that “The NSW Association for Mental Health may be able to bring departmental services further into the community so there would be a more accepting relationship by the community of the mental health hospitals, clinics and rehabilitation services.” There was also comment about the very large number of people who for some reason or another did not get the services they needed.

1960

The Association for Mental Health’s World Mental Health Year Project was based around “The Intellectually Handicapped Child”.

1962

The emotional problems of migrants, associated with their absorption into the Australian community, was a subject of discussion during that year. Another Association publication noted “There is among some people a tendency towards impatience, expressed against those who come from abroad, who do not settle as

quickly as they should and do not immediately adopt the customs of their new country. Assimilation however, takes time“.

1963

The Association, in conjunction with the Australian Institute of Management, held a course of four lectures on mental health in industry for management. The program was designed to explain the human situation in industry and human needs arising from it. Special problems peculiar to the middle-aged senior staff member were discussed, amongst other questions. Again, the same mental health issues are arising today.

1974

The Association parented a number of organizations that still flourish today, including the Alzheimer's Association and ARAFMI.

Major mental health promotion events

- Mental Health Day / Week Health Week -1950s
- World Mental Health Year – 1959
- Mental Health Sunday – 1960
- Mental Health Month - 1981-83
- Mental Health Week – 1984 – current

Mental Health Week slogans or themes

- Mental Health & the Elderly – 1984
- Peace of Mind – 1985
- Mental Health – a challenge for all - 1986
- Dare to Care – 1989
- There's more to your mental health than you think – 1990
- It's Not So Far From Woe to Go – 1991
- How's your mental elf? – 1992
- Isolation is a Health Hazard - Reach Out - 1993
- The Issue is Attitude - 1994/95
- Mental illness is a comma, not a full stop – 1996
- Labels Belong on Jars – Not People – 1997
- Mental health – it's on for young and old - 1998
- Healthy Mind Healthy Life - 1999/2000

Mental Health Week – the changing focus

In the last three years, we have seen Mental Health Week change its focus from: Stigma / discrimination / education / awareness; to

- Population health / mental health promotion.

However, there is currently some debate within the mental health community about where the health promotion focus should be. The efforts of the NSW Association for Mental Health are now very much focused on the promotion of good mental health for the whole community and making people aware that a person's mental health is as important as their physical health. However, this focus is not accepted by all.

Some consumers, carers and health professionals argue that our efforts should be concentrated on de-stigmatising and educating the public about mental illness.

One other point that is worth noting is that mental health promotion was once the domain of the mental health professionals. The consumers did not have a voice in

the system and therefore were not encouraged to take part in promotion activities. As we know, this has changed significantly. Many promotion activities are now run as a partnership between workers and consumers and carers and of, course, a number of consumer groups carry out promotion events quite independently. Another change occurring within the last couple of years is that organisations in the private and public sectors are also interested in mental health promotion for the benefit of their workforce. This year we have had the NSW Police Service and one of the large brewing companies wanting quantities of resources to distribute to employees.

Mental Health Week 2001

Theme is *mental health and work*. The slogan is “*Mental health – Let’s work on it!*”. During the week we will be calling upon employees and employers to be responsible for ensuring that their workplaces are mentally healthy. Some of you will know that the theme of mental health and work is also the focus of a two-year campaign, begun in 2000, by the World Federation for Mental Health. Our longer working hours, the increasing amount of short-term contract employment (as opposed to permanent employment) and the increased levels of change within the workplace can all have an effect on our mental health. It seemed timely to focus Mental Health Week around a theme that would hopefully have some resonance with a great many people.

Mental Health Week will begin with the launch on Monday, October 8 at Government House by the NSW Minister for Health. It has been encouraging that Health Ministers have, in the past few years, consistently been available to launch the Week. Our speakers at the launch will be the Governor of NSW Professor Marie Bashir AC, and Yarif Freestone and Elaine Baxter who are the Consumer and Carer representatives from the New England Area Health Service. Prof. Beverley Raphael from the Centre for Mental Health will also be presenting awards and launching The Association’s Support Group Survival Kit and video.

Resources

Include posters, postcards, balloons, magnets, stress kit, mental health information kit, and a media kit. Over 350 organisations requested orders for resources. We also mailed out posters and resources about mental health and work to approximately 120 of the largest companies and employers in NSW.

Events

Include a wide range of events such as art and craft shows, trivia nights, information stalls, open days at community health centres, community forums, relaxation sessions, sports carnivals, stress less walks, BBQs, music festivals and movie shows.

Media coverage

Obtaining good media coverage for Mental Health Week is often difficult - the media usually want to know if there is any new information or data on which they can base their article or story. This year we have worked with some students from the University of Technology via the UTS Shopfront service. These students are currently completing a survey on various aspects of mental health, stress and work. The results of this survey will be used in press releases sent to media outlets around NSW just prior to Mental Health Week.

Mental Health Week Advisory Committee

While the responsibility for coordinating Mental Health Week rests with NSWAMH, the Mental Health Week Advisory Committee, which has previously been convened at the beginning of each year, plays an important role in shaping the direction of our

mental health promotion efforts. The Committee is comprised of representatives from consumers groups, carer groups, other mental health NGOs, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, area health services, NSW Health Department, and individuals. Committee members voice their opinions, ask questions, and put forward ideas so that the Mental Health Week campaign will reach as many people as possible. We would also like to see the Mental Health Week Advisory Committee develop into a committee focusing on mental health promotion generally, with Mental Health Week, being just one aspect of that. If people are interested in being a part of that committee, we would like to hear from you. The committee would advise on strategies and opportunities for mental health promotion activities.

NSWAMH and other health promotion

The Association is involved in other health promotion activities apart from Mental Health Week.

- Mental Health Information Service - promotes good mental health and awareness of mental health issues. The MHIS helps to increase the mental health literacy of people and assists in maintaining good mental health for carers and consumers. The MHIS will soon embark on promoting itself to groups that we have identified as not currently using the info service – men, people from particular rural areas, and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people.
- NSWAMH Website - contains fact sheets and links to other useful sites plus information about the specific projects being undertaken by our Association.
- Support groups - promote good mental health for participants and their circle of friends and carers.
- Depression and Anxiety Screening Day – to be held in late March. We will be working with other NGOs, local community mental health teams, and Divisions of General Practice, to run a day when people can ask questions and talk to a health professional about anxiety and depression issues. The main idea is to encourage people to then seek further help with an appropriate health professional should some issue of concern be identified. The details of how the day will work have yet to be fleshed out but we believe that it will be something that will help promote better mental health and assist in early intervention. Depression & Anxiety Screening Days have been run successfully in the U.S. and Canada. And we look forward to working with the health community to ensure their success in NSW.

NGOs and mental health promotion

- What is currently happening in your agency?
- What opportunities are there for NGOs to get involved?
- What sorts of programs/projects?
- What opportunities are there for partnerships?

There are currently opportunities to focus on promotion, prevention, early intervention eg caring for carers and young people as carers. Our Association is keen to be more involved in mental health promotion and would be glad to talk with other NGOs as to how we could collaborate.