



Mental health in Lebanon

Until recently, interventions in Lebanon to address mental health issues were mainly limited to the provision by the Ministry of Public Health of psychotropic medication to patients who cannot afford it through the essential drugs programme.

However, since the crisis of July 2006, addressing mental health issues became a more pressing need nationally. Since then, WHO Lebanon, in coordination with the Ministry of Public Health, has implemented several initiatives, focusing mainly on introducing primary health care workers to the principles of mental health first aid according to Inter-Agency Standing Committee recommendations. This has included the development and dissemination by WHO of a national mental health guidebook for primary health care workers.

With the Syrian crisis, the influx of more than one million displaced Syrians and Palestinians has further changed the context of mental health in Lebanon. Around 300 000 displaced Syrians are estimated to be particularly vulnerable, 60% of them women and children.

In 2011, in line with increased need, WHO supported a national mental health situation analysis and the development of a draft strategy with suggested priority programme areas. These documents have been the basis for most interventions over the past three years.

A series of workshops targeting staff in primary health care centres have been held to introduce mental health concepts, needs and management in emergency and post-crisis settings. A total of 450 centres were covered, involving around 600 staff, including nurses and social workers.

In addition, three mental health surveys addressing post-traumatic stress disorder have been conducted in elderly nursing homes, and posters on domestic violence created and distributed to targeted audiences.

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Saturday 4th of May 2024 05:30:02 AM