



## » Speaking Out on Depression

World Mental Health Day roundtable, October 2012

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*Depression: A Global Crisis* was the theme of this year's World Mental Health Day, celebrated on 10 October 2012.

Depression is a timely topic, given that the disease affects more than 350 million people worldwide and affects individuals regardless of their age, gender or socio-economic condition. Despite the availability of effective treatments for depression, fewer than half of those affected throughout the world get the treatment they need. Stigma is one of the barriers to care, as well as lack of resources and trained health-care providers.

To mark the event, WHO organized a round-table discussion on depression with participation from British Members of Parliament Mr Kevan Jones and Dr Sarah Wollaston. Both of them eloquently and

openly shared their personal struggles with depression and their successful recoveries to lead full working lives. They strongly urged those with depression to seek professional help and not to suffer in silence.

A video was produced especially for World Mental Health Day by Australia-based writer and illustrator Mr Matthew Johnstone, based on his popular book *I Had a Black Dog*, which deals with his own experience with depression. The Black Dog video in its several language versions has achieved a WHO milestone of more than 100,000 hits on YouTube within three months of its release.



WHO Black Dog video:

<http://youtu.be/XiCrniLQGYc>

WHO Fact Sheet on depression:

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs369/en/index.html>

## » Roadmap for Mental Health

At the request of Member States, the WHO Secretariat has developed a comprehensive Global Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020. During a five-month consultation period, WHO held face-to-face meetings in many regions of the world,

and it conducted web-based consultation. Feedback was received from a total of 134 countries, 60 WHO collaborating centres and academic centres, 76 non-governmental organizations as well as 13 other organizations and individual experts.

The Secretariat will now submit the Mental Health Action Plan to the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly through its Executive Board, for consideration by Member States in 2013.

## » New Era for Mental Health



### China's achievement in mental health

*Individuals with mental health problems in the world's most populous nation can expect a better life now that China has a new mental health law.*

The new law improves and protects the rights, treatment and care of those suffering from mental health problems. The legislation calls for increased government support to general hospitals nationwide. The law also provides tougher regulations of medical practices. For example, safeguards will be in place against forced hospitalization.

According to China's Ministry of Health:

*"The new law starting on 1 May 2013 is an important achievement in the development of mental health services — not only does it fill a legal gap, but it improves the protection of human rights. Under this new law, a nationwide advocacy campaign will be initiated to help stakeholders in mental health services."*

China has approximately 16 million people requiring mental health care, but fewer than half receive any treatment. There is therefore no doubt that the country needs this long-awaited and landmark law.

This passage of the law is welcome news and places China in the group of 70% of the world's nations with national mental health legislation.



### New mental health law passed in Ghana

*In Ghana, help is on its way to individuals needing mental health care — but who are not yet receiving treatment — in the form of a mental health law enacted on 31 May 2012. The thrust of the new legislation is to protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of those with mental illness, as well as making sure that mental health care is nationally available, accessible, acceptable and of good quality.*

Especially important provisions of the law are the shifting of emphasis from institutional care to community care and the integration of mental health care into general health care. Holistic care will receive priority involving all categories of health-care providers. Not left out of the mix are the many traditional and faith-based healers, who will be trained, regulated and used as informal community mental health workers.

Ghana's new law also establishes a fund that will provide mental health services free

of charge to anyone in need. It also recognizes the importance of public education and mental health educational programmes. Those should help advance self-care, prevention, and the reduction of social stigma and discrimination.

The law will answer a real need in Ghana, which is facing a mental health treatment gap of a staggering 98%. WHO provided technical support to formulate the law, which can be seen as the culmination of eight years of encouragement from mental

health personnel and service users, NGOs, the media and civil society.

Ghana is serious about helping individuals who need mental health care. As evidence of that, for the first time in its history, it has arranged for people with mental disabilities, in three psychiatric hospitals, to be registered in general elections. This is certainly a step in the right direction and a meaningful accompaniment to the new mental health law.

## » Fight Against Epilepsy

*A 4-Year pilot initiative to bring epilepsy out of the shadows in Ghana and Viet Nam*

WHO in collaboration with the Ministries of Health of Ghana and Viet Nam, is addressing the treatment gap in the management of epilepsy through the initiative *Fight Against Epilepsy*. Supported by the Sanofi Espoir Foundation for a 4-year period, in partnership with the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) and the International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE), the goal of the *Fight Against Epilepsy* initiative is to improve access to care and services for people with epilepsy, raise awareness on epilepsy, and place it as a priority in the national health agenda.

Epilepsy, a brain disorder, affects more than 50 million people worldwide. Epilepsy treatment has long been neglected in public health programmes despite the high disease burden, major impact on people it affects, and the availability of inexpensive and cost-effective treatment. About 75% of people with epilepsy in resource-poor countries do not receive the treatments they need.

The objectives of this *Fight Against Epilepsy* initiative, deployed as a pilot phase in Ghana and in Vietnam, are to integrate epilepsy management in primary health care systems, train different categories of health care providers including community health care workers,

improve awareness of community groups to decrease stigma and increase demand for epilepsy care. The project has been initiated in Ghana's Greater Accra and Northern regions and Viet Nam's Phu Tho and Hung Yen provinces. The initiative would benefit people with epilepsy and their families, health-care providers (notably doctors and nurses), health policy-makers, nongovernmental organizations, foundations, and private and voluntary organizations.



Launch of the "Fight Against Epilepsy" initiative in Tolon-Kumbungu District, Northern Region, Ghana.

## » Improving Rights of People with Mental Health Conditions

*WHO's "QualityRights Project" tool kit shows how*

On 28 June 2012, WHO officially launched the *QualityRights Project* and accompanying Tool Kit. Speakers from backgrounds as diverse as the glamour of Hollywood and the slums of India related experiences and urged action. Among the many presenters were Mr Gary Foster, film producer and mental health advocate, and Mr Gregory David Roberts, bestselling author of *Shantaram*.

The *QualityRights Project* aims to change the status quo, which is one where people with mental health conditions have to face the everyday occurrence of poor quality services and human rights violations. Among the various examples of abuse are overcrowded conditions in psychiatric

institutions and people with mental disabilities being overmedicated and even subjected to violence.

The toolkit enables countries to assess and improve quality and human rights mental health and social care facilities and can be used by ministries of health, civil society organizations, health or mental health commissions, national human rights institutions and other relevant stakeholders. It explains how to conduct comprehensive assessments, to report findings and to make recommendations.

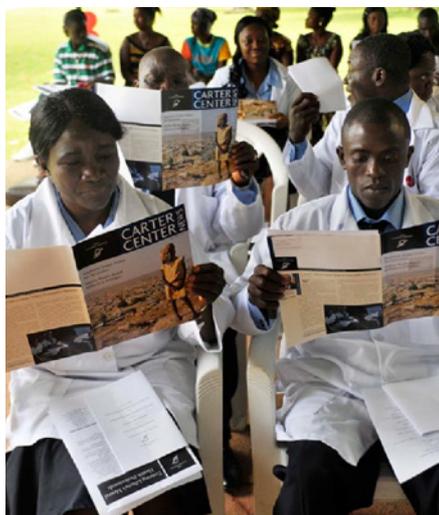
The tool kit will help to ensure that people with mental health conditions will receive

appropriate care, will benefit from safe and hygienic living conditions and will not live in fear of violence and abuse.

*QualityRights Project:*  
[http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/policy/quality\\_rights/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mental_health/policy/quality_rights/en/index.html)

Tool kit:  
[http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/publications/QualityRights\\_toolkit/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mental_health/publications/QualityRights_toolkit/en/index.html)





Graduates who will return to their positions at community health clinics/ health care education institutions ready to integrate mental health into Liberia's primary care system.

## » Success Predicted for Mental Health Programme in Liberia

The Carter Center Mental Health Liberia Initiative works in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to build mental health infrastructure in this post-conflict nation. Less than one per cent of Liberians have access to appropriate mental health services.

This five-year initiative aims to build a sustainable, culturally appropriate mental health training system for nurse and physician assistant professionals. Once the mental health clinicians become certified, the new cadre of mental health workers benefit from continuing education opportunities, as well as online mentoring and case management consultations. With the

goal of training 150 specialized nurses and physician assistants, along with assisting the Government to credential 300 other mental health workers by 2015, The Carter Center currently has programme graduates working in 14 of the nation's 15 counties.

In addition, the initiative assists the Government to implement its National Mental Health Plan, as well as focusing on support for family caregivers and mental health advocacy to reduce stigma and discrimination.

Additional information can be found at: <http://www.cartercenter.org/countries/liberia-health.html>

## » Making Mental Health part of the Global Health Agenda

*It simply makes sense to increase and improve mental health care*

The Gulbenkian Foundation is developing a Global Mental Health Platform to enhance awareness of, and interest in, mental health issues by the international community. The Foundation will also promote a global art initiative centred on mental health and human rights issues, a global web forum, and, in 2015, a major international mental health event.

WHO is collaborating with the Gulbenkian Foundation to develop 4 thematic papers, including: i) integrating the response to mental disorders in health systems;

ii) innovating mental health care; iii) protecting children with mental and intellectual disabilities; and iv) promoting mental health by modifying social determinants.

Gulbenkian Global Mental Health Platform: [http://www.gulbenkianmhplatform.com/information/news?id\\_news=43](http://www.gulbenkianmhplatform.com/information/news?id_news=43)

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation: <http://www.gulbenkian.pt/section57artId-350langId2.html>



Ms Vandana Gopikumar, Chennai, India, received this year's award for "Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Mental Health Care" from The Swiss Foundation for World Health. Ms Gopikumar runs "The Banyan", providing mental health services for homeless people.

The Banyan: [www.TheBanyan.org](http://www.TheBanyan.org)