

Yemen

General Information

Yemen is a country with an approximate area of 528 thousand sq. km. (UNO, 2001). Its population is 20.732 million, and the sex ratio (men per hundred women) is 103 (UNO, 2004). The proportion of population under the age of 15 years is 48% (UNO, 2004), and the proportion of population above the age of 60 years is 4% (WHO, 2004). The literacy rate is 69.5% for men and 28.5% for women (UNESCO/MoH, 2004).

The country is a low income group country (based on World Bank 2004 criteria). The proportion of health budget to GDP is 4.5%. The per capita total expenditure on health is 69 international \$, and the per capita government expenditure on health is 24 international \$ (WHO, 2004).

The main language(s) used in the country is (are) Arabic. The largest ethnic group(s) is (are) Arab. The largest religious group(s) is (are) Muslim.

The life expectancy at birth is 58.7 years for males and 62.2 years for females (WHO, 2004). The healthy life expectancy at birth is 48 years for males and 51 years for females (WHO, 2004).

Epidemiology

There is a paucity of epidemiological data on mental illnesses in Yemen in internationally accessible literature. Hassan et al (2002) assessed the effect of khat chewing on mood symptoms in 200 healthy volunteers in a hospital. They used the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale to assess symptoms in khat chewing and abstinent arms. More mood symptoms were reported by the group that continued to chew khat.

Mental Health Resources

Mental Health Policy

A mental health policy is present. The policy was initially formulated in 1986.

The components of the policy are promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

Substance Abuse Policy

A substance abuse policy is absent.

National Mental Health Programme

A national mental health programme is present. The programme was formulated in 1983.

The goals of the programme are integration of mental health services into primary care, initiating a school health programme, increasing the number of psychiatric beds in hospitals and providing training facilities.

National Therapeutic Drug Policy/Essential List of Drugs

A national therapeutic drug policy/essential list of drugs is present. It was formulated in 1986.

Mental Health Legislation

There is no mental health legislation. Islamic laws are used for people with mental illness.

Details about the year of enactment of the mental health legislation are not available.

Mental Health Financing

There are budget allocations for mental health.

Details about expenditure on mental health are not available.

The primary sources of mental health financing in descending order are out of pocket expenditure by the patient or family and tax based.

The country has disability benefits for persons with mental disorders. Monthly social benefits may be given to some mentally ill patients.

Mental Health Facilities

Mental health is a part of primary health care system. Actual treatment of severe mental disorders is available at the primary level. Primary care is available in some areas only.

Regular training of primary care professionals is carried out in the field of mental health. In the last two years, about 150 personnel were provided training. Medical officers and health workers from rural health facilities and district hospitals and general physicians were trained. Regular in-service training is being provided to nurses.

There are no community care facilities for patients with mental disorders. A community psychiatric care demonstration project has been set up with the help of WHO.

Psychiatric Beds and Professionals

Total psychiatric beds per 10 000 population	1.85
Psychiatric beds in mental hospitals per 10 000 population	1.1
Psychiatric beds in general hospitals per 10 000 population	0.4
Psychiatric beds in other settings per 10 000 population	0.35
Number of psychiatrists per 100 000 population	0.5
Number of neurosurgeons per 100 000 population	0.06
Number of psychiatric nurses per 100 000 population	0.09
Number of neurologists per 100 000 population	0.08
Number of psychologists per 100 000 population	1.2
Number of social workers per 100 000 population	0.04

Some beds have been earmarked for women. The number of beds in prison psychiatric wards have been reduced by two-thirds and psychiatric patients are separated from other inmates in the prison.

Non-Governmental Organizations

NGOs are involved with mental health in the country. They are mainly involved in treatment and rehabilitation. The International Committee of the Red Cross has helped in the provision of services and reform in prison psychiatric wards.

Information Gathering System

There is mental health reporting system in the country. It is included in the 5 years plan of health reporting.

The country has no data collection system or epidemiological study on mental health.

Rehabilitation centres for mentally challenged individuals are available.

Programmes for Special Population

The country has specific programmes for mental health for refugees. There is a mental hospital for women in Sanaa.

Therapeutic Drugs

The following therapeutic drugs are generally available at the primary health care level of the country: carbamazepine, phenobarbital, sodium valproate, amitriptyline, chlorpromazine, diazepam, haloperidol.

Yemen follows the WHO Essential Drug List.

Other Information

Mental health services were practically non-existent before 1966 and patients used to be kept in prisons. Since then, a lot of improvement has occurred. Hospitals have been built, training provided to different personnel at all levels of care and the administration has been educated about psychiatric illnesses. Different NGOs and WHO helped in building the infrastructure. However, there are some difficulties in the form of inadequate financial support or poor follow-up facilities that have slowed down the implementation of the mental health programme.

Additional Sources of Information

•Hassan, N. A., Gunaid, A. A., El Khally, F. M., et al (2002) The effect of chewing Khat leaves on human mood. Saudi Medical Journal, 23, 850-853.