

MENTAL HEALTH AND POLICING IN GHANA

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GHANA



- Independence in 1957
- Population 26 million
- Majority Christianity (70%)
- 240,000 Square kilometers
- Strong democracy
- Elections in Dec 2016

BACKGROUND

- Health is a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (WHO)
- Mental health is determined by a range of socioeconomic, biological and environmental factors
- Ghana's Mental Health Act 846 defines it as the state of well being of the mind in which one is capable of functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional, psychological and behavioral adjustment personally and with society

BACKGROUND

- There are 3 main psychiatric hospitals and 2 psychiatric training schools. As at 2011, there was only one psychiatric training school
- A total of 4,500 medical doctors but 14 qualified psychiatrist
- According to the CEO of MHA, doctor-patient ratio was around 1: 2 million people which is woefully inadequate
- This over burdens the staff leading to some running away on the streets, markets, lorry parks, villages and many more







BACKGROUND

- Common mental conditions
 1. Autism
 2. Schizophrenia
 3. Depression
 4. Addiction/abuse
 5. Mental retardation
 6. Epilepsy

GHANA POLICE SERVICE

- Established in 1831 as a Police Force by Britain
- Later changed in 1957 as a Police Service
- Currently under the regulation of Constitutional Instrument 76
- Estimation of 35000 personnel
- Unitary command with other regional commanders

GHANA POLICE SERVICE – our mandate

- To maintain Law and Order
- Protect life and property
- Apprehend and prosecute criminal offenders
- To prevent and detect crime

ACHIEVING THE MANDATE

- Police establishments such as
 1. Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU)
 2. Formed Police Unit – FPU
 3. Criminal Investigation Department – CID
 4. Police Hospital, Motor Traffic and Transport Department etc
- Police Training Schools where personnel are taken through vigorous training – mainly drills and criminal laws

POLICING IN THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT

846

- 73(1) A police officer may remove a person to a facility or mental health facility for assessment under a certificate of urgency if that person is found in a public place appearing to be suffering from mental disorder and is highly aggressive or showing out-of-control behavior and appears to require immediate care, control and treatment
- First point of call when mental health patients get aggressive
- Personnel are attacked and injured or killed

POLICING IN THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT 846

- Ratio of Police personnel to the number of citizens is very low
- Stress on personnel who work long hours without enough rest
- Burn out syndrome
- State of despair and are likely to become psychologically unwell. Most of whom will be referred to the Medical Board for assessment.
- Over 100 referred to MB in 5yrs, 15 by July 2016. Some have been discharged of their duties due to mental health

STATEMENTS FROM PERSONNEL

- ‘ the day I will get a gun, I will kill all of you in this office’
- ‘ a sharpened knife and a club awaits anyone who comes near my residence’
- ‘ we are working with mad people’
- ‘ how can we go chasing people who are mad’. This is as a result of a decision by one of the police commands to arrest all mentally ill persons roaming the street, markets

KEY ISSUES

- Mental examination is not part of police recruitment
- Few mental health facilities and specialist
- Police personnel to undergo routine psychological examination since we handle weapons. The stress of policing can aggravate predisposition to mental illness – the case of a police officer who killed his family and himself
- Poor health seeking behaviour
- The Service lack enough clinical psychologist

KEY ISSUES

- Police Hospital has no qualified Psychiatrist
- Police personnel who are usually dispatched to effect arrest of aggressive mentally ill patients do not have adequate training in handling them
- Inadequate protective equipment for police personnel
- Presumed low knowledge of the provision made in the Mental Health Act regarding Police

WHAT IS BEING DONE

- Decentralizing care for mental health cases at all district/regional hospitals – 123 mental health outpatient facilities
- Promote community psychiatry – help reintegration, address stigma and discrimination,
- The main Psychiatric Hospitals has been made a referral hospitals to ease the pressure
- Police medical officer is undergoing training as a psychiatrist

WHAT IS BEING DONE

- To lessen the burden in the area of mental health, the Ghana Health Service liaised with the National Service Secretariat to post psychology students from the universities to health facilities for them to help with public education, assist mental patients to take their drugs regularly and offer counselling services (Dr. Osei)
- The graduates work under the supervision of psychiatric nurses

CONCLUSION

- Mental health is a major health burden on the country considering the number cases
- Few mental health hospitals are in existence to manage these cases
- A very high patient doctor ratio which puts burden on the few psychiatrist who manages the cases
- Police personnel are called upon to effect arrest of mentally ill patients who run out to the streets etc. police officers get injured and killed by aggressive one

CONCLUSION

- The ratio of police personnel to citizens is low, coupled with long working hours with inadequate rest makes policing very difficult
- Such conditions predisposes personnel to mental illness and are deemed unfit to be in the service

WAY FORWARD

- Plan a strategy for Police Administration to buy in on adding mental examination to recruitment process and for those who are already in the service
- Train or recruit more clinical psychologist and psychiatrist
- Strategize to educate police personnel on mental health issues and the MHA 846
- Establish more psychiatric training schools and hospitals
- Encourage interest in the study of mental health
- Strategize to improve routine health seeking behaviour

THANK YOU MEDAASE

