



INTERCOUNTRY GROUP MEETING ON THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME

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IMPORTANT AND RELEVANT DATA
ON THE
CYPRUS MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM
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- 1) The Basic structure for a more fully sectorized, community-Based Mental health system exists in Cyprus.
- 2) The new law will encourage and support further, more adequate developments in this respect.
- 3) We have undertaken a very comprehensive study - which will be ready by next month, on the existing Mental health system, which will allow us gradual and secure move forward to establishment of a community-Based service and a parallel running down and upgrading of the one ^{and} only psychiatric hospital in the Island.

Some important findings from the study

- { 0.9 hospital Beds per nurse in general medicine.
- { 2.4 psychiatric beds per nurse in Mental Health Services.

- { The number of persons (general population) per nurse is 391
- { The number of persons (" ") per psych. nurse is 1438.

- { The number of persons per doctor (Both private and public) is 779
- { The number of persons per psychiatrist (both priv. and public) is 19707 i.e. 5.1 psychiatrists per 100,000 population.
- { The number of persons per government psychiatrist is 34,139 or 2.9 psychiatrists per 100,000 population.

However there is an uneven distribution of psychiatrists in the various districts: for example 1 psychiatrist per 10,027 persons in Nicosia District and 1 psychiatrist per 100,000 persons for Famagusta and Larnaca Districts combined.

- { In non-psychiatric hospitals in the Island: one consultant to 28 pts
- { In the psychiatric hospital " " " : one consultant to 820 pts
- { Although 43% of government hospital beds are occupied by mentally ill people only 2.5% of all consultants are psychiatrists.

- { In the Mental Health Services there are 42 nurses to every 100 patients: (1:2.4)
- { In the non-psychiatric hospitals there are 99 nurses to every 100 patients: (1:1 almost).

- { 3.01% of the Gross National Product is devoted to Health Services £27,000,000 : Out of this a mere 9% is allocated to the Mental Health Services (1981).

Mental Hospital Statistics

Despite more effective treatment methods and some elements of sectorized psychiatry-psychiatric units in districts the admissions to the mental hospital have continued to increase. Not only the overall admission figures (esp. those admitted for observation and were discharged) but also the proportion of readmissions have risen (vide Table 1).

Although the number of people occupying beds at the Mental Hospital at any one time was slightly decreased over the years, the proportion of long-stay patients (2 years and over) has not decreased significantly. In 1982 76% of the mental patients residing in the mental hospital were long-stay patients (26% of them are in the hospital for over 20 years and 49% of them over 10 years). Therefore chronicity with its associated problems is a serious problem to be realistically confronted.

Considering the number of patients treated yearly at the Mental Hospital (over the years 1972 - 1982) we evidence a continuous increase until 1981, with a slight drop in 1982 compared to the previous eight years, but still this being an increase on the 1972 year number of treated patients.

Psychogeriatric cases (65 years old and over)

There is an increase in the number of psychiatric cases residing in the Mental Hospital over the years: In 1982 they represent almost 19% of the total resident population in comparison with 15.42% in 1973; moreover 38.41% of the resident cases in the mental hospital were 55 years old and over in 1982 as compared with 35% in 1973.

Bed Occupancy Rate

This statistic reflects the state of overcrowding at the Mental Hospital.

Though the evidence is one of a slight drop in the occupancy rate from 100.80% (1977) to 88.30% (1982); there is still room for further decrease.

These problems can only effectively be solved through the establishment of adequate in number quality and variety community-based facilities.

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Primary Mental Health Care in Cyprus

A) At present such care is delivered in Cyprus:-

- (1) through the District General Hospital psychiatric clinics, where multidisciplinary teams are established (Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca)
- (ii) through the work of 2 community mental health nurses attached to the Nicosia psychiatric clinic.

B) Plans for the immediate future, to subserve effectively primary care:-

- (1) Training of an adequate number of community mental health nurses to be stationed at the psychiatric clinics and the rural health centres in the island.
- (2) Short courses on mental health for health visitors and other medical and paramedical staff attached to the rural health centres.
- (3) Establishment of the 24-hour crisis intervention service in each district and mobile psychiatric units for each district- these will be stationed at the district psychiatric clinics.
- (4) More involvement of psychologists in the General Hospitals in each District.
- (5) Immediate expansion of psychiatric clinics in the two remaining districts - Larnaca and Paphos within the next two years.
- (6) The establishment of a more comprehensive mental health clinic-mental health centres, including counseling, early diagnosis and primary prevention as well as child guidance and day hospital facilities in Nicosia is under way.
- (7) Generally the delivery of mental health services^{to} be come truly sectorized and more fully community-based with more emphasis on out-patient care and on primary mental health care. The new Mental Health Law, which will be ready by the end of this year or in the beginning of the new year 1984, legalizes and supports these new orientations.