

Directing Council
**PAN AMERICAN
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION**
XL Meeting

Regional Committee
**WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION**
XLIX Meeting

Washington, D.C.
September 1997

Provisional Agenda Item 5.4

CD40/15 (Eng.)
8 July 1997
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

MENTAL HEALTH

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>CE120.R20 MENTAL HEALTH</i>	<i>5</i>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of the Program on Mental Health of the Division of Health Promotion and Protection, which was examined by the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming in April 1995 and by the Executive Committee in June 1996, is to provide technical cooperation to the countries in activities related to mental health and psychiatric care. The Program has three components: (1) the promotion of mental health and primary prevention of psychiatric disorders; (2) the control of psychiatric disorders; and (3) interventions on the psychosocial aspects of health and human development.

The Program's technical cooperation priorities and strategies arise from a regional situation analysis and the interpretation and implementation of the policies of PAHO's Governing Bodies. The analysis reveals that, notwithstanding the definition of health adopted by the Member States and the intrinsic importance of mental health, this area generally receives inadequate support from the governments and is undervalued by society, in spite of the overwhelming current and future needs. By way of illustration, in 1990 five out of the world's 10 leading causes of disability were psychiatric in nature; by the end of the century some 88 million adults in Latin America and the Caribbean will have experienced some form of emotional disorder; and more than 11 million will suffer from affective disorders by the year 2010. It should also be noted that children are not exempt from the need for mental health care; in Latin America and the Caribbean, an estimated 17 million boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 16 suffer from psychiatric disorders that warrant intervention. Health for All by the year 2000 will thus be an elusive goal unless the current state of mental health programs and services is improved through technical creativity and firm political will.

The analysis also reveals that the orientation of the services available to meet these needs is frequently inappropriate and that the number of such services is inadequate and the quality deficient. In order to respond to this situation the Initiative for the Restructuring of Psychiatric Care was launched, with support from PAHOWHO Collaborating Centers and regional and international agencies. The implementation of the Initiative relies on a number of strategic approaches: the transfer of services and knowledge to the community, the expansion of treatment alternatives for patients and their families, the preservation of human rights, the provision of more humane care, the update of mental health legislation, and the inclusion of patients and family members in the management process. The reorientation of the services makes it possible to conduct community programs to control three neuropsychiatric disorders— depression, epilepsies, and psychoses—which, due to their magnitude and the disability that they produce, place a heavy burden on the populations of the Region. The existence of technical and scientific resources is making it possible to offer a feasible response.

In addition to the previous component, the Program has begun to foster activities to promote the mental health and psychosocial development of children. This has been done under the umbrella of a regional interagency plan of action that has two chief components: the promotion of early childhood development and the reduction of violence against children.

The experience accrued thus far indicates that the Program can be further strengthened through a number of activities. The countries may consider the following lines of action: adopting policies and formulating mental health plans and programs that are intimately articulated with those of health and human development; undertaking the necessary activities to ensure that mental health care is included in the health services provided; strengthening the mental health divisions/departments in the ministries of health taking more decisive action to restructure psychiatric care in terms of services, training, and legislation; the control of affective disorders, epilepsies, and psychoses; broader support for promotion of mental health and the psychosocial development of children as part of an integrated intersectoral model of action; and enlarging the cadres of professional experts who lead the mental health programs through fellowships and other pertinent measures.

During the discussion of this item at the 120th Session of the Executive Committee, the Member States agreed on the need to strengthen mental health activities and improve psychiatric services in order to overcome the current deficiencies. It should be noted that the proposed resolution that is being submitted to the XL Directing Council includes an item urging the Member States to incorporate mental health care into the health services provided. This reflects the prevailing consensus in the Executive Committee about the importance of making mental health care duly accessible and giving it parity with health care in general.

TO CONSULT THE COMPLETE DOCUMENT YOU MAY CLICK HERE ON DOC. NO. 137, CE1209, presented to the 120th Executive Committee.

The fundamental purposes of the Pan American Health Organization . . . shall be to promote and coordinate efforts of the countries of the Western Hemisphere to combat disease, lengthen life and promote the physical and *mental* health of the people (*Constitution of the Pan American Health Organization, Chap. I, Art. 1*).

Health is a state of complete physical, *mental*, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (*Constitution of the World Health Organization*).

CE120.R20

MENTAL HEALTH

THE 120th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,

Having seen the report on mental health (Document CE12019),

RESOLVES:

To recommend to the Directing Council the adoption of a resolution in the following terms:

THE XL MEETING OF THE DIRECTING COUNCIL,

Having seen the report on mental health (Document CD4015);

Taking into account that the mental health care needs of the population are growing as a result of the demographic changes under way in the Region of the Americas and the widening scope of the field of mental health;

Aware of the existence of technologies that make it possible to control psychiatric disorders; and

Considering that actions for the promotion of mental health and the psychosocial development of children complement those promoted by the World Summit for Children,

RESOLVES:

1. To urge the Member States to:

(a) formulate and implement national mental health programs articulated with health programs in general;

- (b) intensify support for efforts to reorient mental health services to ensure that community care will be provided, in keeping with the initiative for the restructuring of psychiatric care described in Document CD4015;
- (c) actively promote and support the inclusion of mental health services in every health insurance or payment plan and every health care services program;
- (d) develop programs for the treatment of affective disorders, epilepsies, and psychoses;
- (e) strengthen or carry out actions for the promotion of mental health and the psychosocial development of children, with special emphasis on the early years;
- (f) support training for the managers of mental health programs in the schools of public health;
- (g) make efforts to improve the legislation to protect the human rights of psychiatric patients.

2. To request the Director to:

- (a) continue technical cooperation with the countries and intensify it, as financial resources permit;
- (b) continue supporting the inclusion of mental health topics in all health forums and activities, and in joint activities with other agencies of the inter-American system;
- (c) express the Organization's appreciation for the generous collaboration being provided by European regions and communities, and its thanks to the WHO Collaborating Centers in the Region;
- (d) support programs to train leaders specializing in mental health.

*(Adopted at the seventh plenary session,
26 June 1997)*