Public mental health services in South Africa: inter-provincial comparisons and policy implications

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Introduction

- Mental health is increasingly acknowledged as an important public health issue in SA:
  - Neuropsychiatric conditions rank 3rd in burden of disease in SA\(^1\)
  - 12-month prevalence:
    - Common mental disorders in adults: 16.5\(\%\)\(^2\)
    - All mental disorders in children & adolescents: 17\(\%\)\(^3\)
- Yet mental health services are chronically under-funded and low on the priority list

1. Bradshaw et al, 2007
2. Williams et al, 2008
Introduction

• Policy and legislation developments in SA:
  – Mental health policy guidelines (1997)
  – Mental Health Care Act (2002)
• Study aim:
  – To document public sector mental health service provision in South Africa, focusing on the provincial level
Methods

• Survey of public mental health services using WHO-AIMS 2.2
• Included:
  – 9 provincial government health departments
  – 17 Mental health societies of SA Federation for Mental Health
• Excluded:
  – Facilities for learning disabilities
  – Facilities for substance abuse
  – Private sector
Methods

• WHO AIMS includes 6 domains (28 facets, 156 items):
  1. Policy and legislative framework
  2. Mental health services
  3. Mental health in primary care
  4. Human resources
  5. Public education and links with other sectors
  6. Monitoring and research
Methods

• WHO AIMS spreadsheets distributed to:
  – National Directorate of MH and substance abuse
  – 9 provincial mental health coordinators
  – 17 mental health societies of SAFMH
  – HPCSA
  – SA Nursing Council
  – SA Council of Social Service professions
• Followed up with emails, faxes, telephone interviews
• Preliminary findings discussed at national meeting of provincial mental health coordinators, July 2007
Results
1. Policy, structure and plans

- Mental health policy guidelines (1997) – status?
- White paper (1997) – chapter 12: Mental Health
- Mental Health Care Act (2002)
- National mental health authority
  - Provides policy direction
  - Currently prioritising MH Care Act implementation
- Provinces:
  - Directorates or sub-directorates
  - Varying seniority and experience of provincial MH coordinators
  - Only 5/9 provinces have provincial MH plans
2. Financing

• Tax-based, as with DoH
• National budget allocations to mental health unknown
• Only 3/9 provinces could provide data on % allocation of health budget to MH:
  – Mpumalanga: 8%
  – North West: 5%
  – Northern Cape: 1%
• Cost of generic medication on EDL:
  – Antipsychotic (chlorpromazine): 24 cents per day (0.7% of DMW)
  – Antidepressant (amitriptyline): 15 cents per day (0.5% of DMW)
3. Human rights protection

- MH Care Act: Review Boards established in each province
  - Oversee regular inspections of MH facilities
  - Review involuntary admissions and discharges
  - Hear appeals/complaints
- Review of human rights protection in 2005:
  - 52% of mental hospitals
  - 29% of psychiatric inpatient units
## 4. Mental health service types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Users (annual per 100,000 pop)</th>
<th>Beds (per 100,000 pop)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outpatient</td>
<td>3,460</td>
<td>1,660</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day treatment</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inpt Units</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comm Res Care</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental hospitals</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Mental health services: bed distributions

[Diagram showing bed distributions across different regions and services: Psych Inpt Units, Comm Res, Mental Hosp, Forensic.]
4. Mental health services: human resources

- Psychiatrists
- Other Med Doctors
- Nurses
- Psychologists
- Social workers
- Occup Therapists
- Other health or MH workers
# Mental Health Services: Information Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Information Compiled</th>
<th>Mental Hospitals</th>
<th>Inpatient Units</th>
<th>Outpatient Facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of beds</td>
<td>8/9</td>
<td>5/9</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. inpatient admissions or outpatient users treated</td>
<td>8/9</td>
<td>5/9</td>
<td>3/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of days spent or outpatient user contacts</td>
<td>7/9</td>
<td>5/9</td>
<td>3/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of involuntary admissions</td>
<td>7/9</td>
<td>5/9</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of users restrained</td>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>5/9</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosis</td>
<td>3/9</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>1/9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. % of PHC clinics with mental health assessment and treatment protocols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Doctor-based PHC clinics:</th>
<th>Non-doctor-based PHC clinics:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>21-50</td>
<td>51-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>51-80</td>
<td>51-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal</td>
<td>51-80</td>
<td>21-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>81-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>51-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>81-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>1-20</td>
<td>81-100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion
Contradictions

• Policy advocates community care, deinstitutionalisation, PHC approach
• MH Care Act consistent with international human rights standards
• Massive inequality between provinces in service resources
• Continued over-reliance on psychiatric institutions
• Striking absence of reliable, routinely collected service data
• Unmet need
Recommendations

• Stronger national leadership
• Development of national policy
• Training and capacity development of provincial mental health planners
• Development of information systems for service monitoring
• Ongoing research:
  – Mental health policy development
  – Evaluation of mental health information systems
  – Integration of mental health into PHC
Acknowledgements

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