Integrating counseling, health and wellness services in an Arab context: Strategies, challenges and rewards

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Research has now clearly demonstrated the interrelation between biological, physical and socio-cultural aspects of illness and well-being, and the bio-psychosocial model of health, illness, healing and well-being has been thoroughly validated and accepted. This model requires medical, counseling and wellness professionals to work together in an integrated manner with clients on their issues so as to enable best outcomes. The bio-psychosocial model has led to significant changes in clinical practice worldwide and has led to a push for integrated healthcare across all levels of care. At the level of higher education too there has been a push for integrated healthcare, and this has led to integration of counseling, health and wellness centers across major accredited US universities. Counseling services and health centers, which previously may have been independent separate units, have been integrated into one organic unit along with wellness services and programs, so as to enable best practices and outcomes. The American College Health Association (ACHA) has been a strong advocate of it and has come out with clear guidelines for it. However, integration of health and counseling services in the Middle East in general and UAE in particular is in its infancy. Zayed University was the first to implement this integration successfully in 2016. This entailed extensive planning and preparation in light of it being a pioneering venture and a unique cultural context. The challenges and rewards of this are analyzed and discussed. Issues in presenting and educating University administrators, getting buy in from all stakeholders, the unique cultural aspects impacting the transition, are all highlighted and discussed. Recommendations are made to enable effective integration in culturally diverse contexts.

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References

Biography
Amal Alawi Bin Alawi – Administrative Officer- Student Counseling Center: Amal Alawi has been appointed Administrative Officer-Student Counseling Center effective 17th November 2016. She is a Zayed University alumni and completed her Bachelor of Science (B.S) degree in Psychology / Human Services in 2016. Amal is currently is studying Master of Science in Clinical Psychology at United Arab Emirates University.

She was the president of Loqya Club in Zayed University from 2015-2016, and she was a volunteer in the Accessibility Center at ZU from 2014-2015. She was also the President of Child Smile project at ZU and she organized several workshops in Juvenile Mafraq center.

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