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Improving mental health for children in Dubai: A public health priority, mental health needs assessment for Dubai, 2015

Kadhim Alabady, Sabya Farooq and Muhammad Wasif Alam
Dubai Health Authority, UAE

Background: Mental health is without doubt one of the most vital aspects of any child's development. It is an essential part of children's overall health and has an impact on the child's physical health and their ability to be successful. Mental health increases children's opportunity to live up to their full potential and do what is best for themselves and the people around them.

Purpose: This report intends to identify key challenges for mental health care for children aged 0–18 years in Dubai. It is of particular importance to understand mental health needs and assess any gaps in care or services.

Method: A qualitative methodology approach was used. A focus group session was conducted concentrating on different topics related to different mental health conditions.

Participants: The focus group consisted of seven mental health professionals including psychiatrists and psychologists from Latifa, Al Jalila and Rashid hospitals with extensive knowledge about mental health illnesses, programs and services.

Setting: A single session was performed at Latifa Hospital during June 2015.

Key findings: Whilst some child mental health services exist, these are fragmented between the public and private sector. There needs to be a catalogue of comprehensive and coordinated services, which health care professionals can access to improve care delivery and utilization of these services. There is a shortage of child mental health professionals such as occupational therapists, speech therapists, mental health nurses and psychologists. There is also a need for on-going training and career development for existing professionals. There is an important need to develop and improve mental health services in the educational system that is tied in with children's mental health services. This will allow provision of effective and timely school interventions for children who require special educational or supportive interventions due to mental health issues.

Biography

Kadhim Alabady, MBBS, MPH, MSc, DrPH holds a Doctorate in Public Health and Epidemiology, Master's degree in Clinical Epidemiology (MSc) and Master's degree in Public Health (MPH), all from The Netherlands University with broad experience driving Research and Development (R&D) strategies and operations.

kalabady@dha.gov.ae

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