

MENTAL HEALTH NURSING FORUM

Wednesday 15 May 2013 Melbourne Australia



INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth Nurses Federation, in partnership with the Australian Nursing Federation and the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses, facilitated a Mental Health Nursing Forum in Melbourne Australia on Wednesday 15 May. Ontario Shores Foundation for Mental Health in Canada and the Commonwealth Foundation sponsored a number of participants from developing countries to attend the Forum. The Australian Nursing Federation sponsored the venue and sustenance for participants.

The purpose of the forum was for nurses to prepare and submit recommendations to go to the Commonwealth Health Ministers prior to the Ministers' consideration of the Global Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020 at the 66th World Health Assembly 20-25 May.

The Forum was held just prior to the International Council of Nurses 25th Quadrennial Congress when representatives of National Nursing Associations across the world met to deliberate on issues of concern. This provided a unique opportunity to discuss the provision of mental health care, the role of nurses in mental health, mental health nurse education and training requirements, and to provide the outcome of those deliberations directly to Commonwealth Health Ministers to inform their consideration of the WHA Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020.

Fifty five nurses from across the Commonwealth attended the Forum: Barbados, Canada, Ghana, Jamaica, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, New Zealand, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, and South Africa, as well as nurses from the host country, Australia.

An additional forty nurses sent their apologies and asked to be forwarded the outcomes of the Forum: Australia, Bahamas, Cameroon, Fiji, Ghana, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, New Zealand, Nigeria, Samoa, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, United Kingdom and Zimbabwe.

Keynote speakers at the Forum were Ms Jill Iliffe, Executive Secretary of the Commonwealth Nurses Federation; Ms Lee Thomas, National Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation; Ms Kim Ryan, Executive Director of the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses; and Dr Frances Hughes, Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, Queensland Health Australia.



Five countries shared the state of mental health care and mental health nursing education and practice in their country. These countries were: Malta, Mauritius, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, and Sierra Leone. Mr Paul Pace (President of the Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses) presented on behalf of Malta. Mr Bagooaduth Kallooa (President of the Mauritius Nursing Association) presented on behalf of Mauritius. Ms Bella Henderson (chief Nursing Officer of the Seychelles) presented on behalf of the Seychelles. Mr William Same (President of the Solomon Islands Nurses Association) presented on behalf of the Solomon Islands and Mr Senesie Margoa (President of the Sierra Leone Nurses Association) presented on behalf of Sierra Leone.



The Forum made a number of recommendations for submission to Commonwealth Health Ministers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Policy

1.1 That all Commonwealth Governments commit to developing and implementing a National Mental Health Action Plan in consultation with doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers, people with mental health problems, families and carers of people with mental health problems, and mental health advocacy groups.

1.2 That all Commonwealth Governments establish a National Mental Health Committee to assess mental health care provision in their country against the World Health Organisation *Quality Rights Toolkit* and the WHO *Mental Health Gap Action Plan* and that the outcome of this assessment is made publicly available.

1.3 That all Commonwealth Governments commit to a National Mental Health Policy which makes mental health a public health priority with a focus on prevention, early diagnosis and effective interventions including access to psychotropic medication; which commits to de-institutionalisation and a wide range of community care options; which upholds respect for and the rights of individuals with mental illness; which integrates mental health care with other health care services and includes participation from people with mental illness, their carers and the mental health workforce; and which provides special care, interventions and facilities for children and adolescents separate to those for adults.

2. Legislation

2.1 That all Commonwealth countries whose mental health legislation has not been reviewed in the past five years conduct an urgent review of their mental health legislation so that it conforms with the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities*.

2.2 That all Commonwealth countries appoint an independent Mental Health Commissioner with power to oversee implementation of the mental health act and mental health service provision and report to Government.

2.3 That legislation and policy includes a requirement that all people with mental health problems who have been institutionalised for more than two years are automatically independently reviewed with a view to less restrictive care.

3. Standards

3.1 That national standards for mental health service provision, mental health facilities, and mental health education and training are developed and endorsed in each Commonwealth country based on global standards already developed and endorsed.

4. Funding

4.1 That funding for mental health care is significantly increased to ensure that mental health receives its fair share of public health resources and that funding for mental health is based on need and the known and anticipated burden of disease.

5. Education and training

5.1 That all nursing students (registered and enrolled) receive a mandatory component of mental health education in their pre-registration courses including access to clinical placements in mental health and that this component is regularly monitored.

5.2 That specialist mental health nursing courses are available in every Commonwealth country at Certificate, Diploma and Maters level, which provide a career path into mental health nursing.

5.3 That cultural awareness and competence training is included in the mental health component of all nursing curricula.

6. Workforce and career paths

6.1 That Commonwealth Governments work with nursing professional associations and unions to improve working conditions and working arrangements for nurses working in the area of mental health, and to promote mental health nursing as a desirable career path.

6.2 That Commonwealth Governments work with nursing professional associations and unions to ensure that nurses working in the area of mental health are adequately remunerated, that they have access to continuing professional development, and that career paths include opportunities for advanced level practice in mental health, such as nurse practitioners, with access to prescribing rights for appropriate mental health medication.

7. Reducing stigma and discrimination

7.1 That all Commonwealth Governments, as part of their National Mental Health Action Plan, develop and fund a public campaign to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental health, and to educate the community and raise public awareness and support for people with mental health problems and the mental health workforce.

THE WAY FORWARD

Nurses constitute the largest component of a country's health workforce. Nurses can and do have an integral and critical role in the provision of mental health care. Nurses need to be educated in mental health at both a basic and specialist level. Governments have a responsibility to facilitate that education. Nurses need career paths in mental health care and satisfying roles which include advanced practice roles such as nurse practitioner. Governments can develop and promote those roles and those career paths. Governments need nurses to provide mental health care. People with mental health problems and their families and carers need nurses to provide that care and be their advocates.

A full copy of the report can be downloaded from: <http://www.commonwealthnurses.org>.