

## CORRESPONDENCE

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Implementation Of Mental Health Policy In Pakistan

### IMPLEMENTATION OF MENTAL HEALTH POLICY IN PAKISTAN

It is very inspiring to see an enthusiastic interest in this neglected subject of mental health policy in Pakistan. The editorial is an excellent effort and a valuable informative piece and within its limitation describes the current situation aptly<sup>1</sup>.

There are almost 20 medical colleges which have affiliated psychiatric units and these are mostly in the government sector. According to Mental Health Atlas 2005, there are only 0.24 psychiatric beds per 10,000 populations in both public and private sector and only 0.2 practicing psychiatrists per 100,000 population<sup>2</sup>, majority of which are providing their services in urban Punjab and Sindh Province with a very low number of psychiatrists in the rest of the country.

As mentioned in the editorial, almost 40% of the countries of the world still don't have a mental health policy and Pakistan is fortunately not one of those<sup>3</sup>. But this policy clearly has not translated into practice. This non practicality is evident from the present law where the extent of criminal and civil liability of mentally ill is unanswered. This means that law on this matter has to be derived from other sources of civil and criminal law.

Non prioritization of the federal health department and the casual attitude of the provinces are worth noticing seriously. For example hardly one meeting of the mental health authority took place during the tenure of previous mental health authority. While the freshly constituted mental health authority of which I am a member as well has so far not called for its first meeting. Board of visitors has yet to come into existence in the provinces.

It is very important to introduce rules and regulations to enforce the ordinance in training and service delivery which are the unmet needs. This should be in line with the report of the subcommittee on mental health and substance abuse thus making the dream of mental health policy, a reality<sup>4</sup>.

Finally, I strongly suggest that the Pakistan Psychiatric Society should form a subcommittee for a dialogue between the various stake holders and beneficiaries (such as mentally ill patients etc.) for sending the appropriate recommendations to the fourth coming Federal Mental Health Authority's meeting.

#### REFERENCES

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