

The WHO Pacific Islands Mental Health Network (PIMHnet)



NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2010

Country activities

During March, Dr Frances Hughes the PIMHnet Facilitator visited the Marshall Islands, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia to work with countries on developing their mental health policies and completing their human resource and training plans.

Marshall Islands

A mental health policy has now been drafted and the National Focal Contact, Marita Edwin is now taking this policy forward with the Minister of Health and the President. An article was recently published about mental health work occurring in the Marshall Islands and is attached at the end of this newsletter.



Dr Frances Hughes with the Marshall Islands Mental Health Council

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Palau

A working draft of a mental health policy and plan has been developed which is now being taken out for consultation. The Mental Health Council will take over the monitoring of the policy and plan and a review of mental health legislation is also planned.



Dr Frances Hughes with the Palau Mental Health Council

In addition, our National Focal Contact for Palau, Everlynn Temengil has been accepted into the one year International Diploma in Mental Health Law and Human Rights. The diploma is offered by the Indian Law Society in collaboration with the WHO. This diploma will provide Everlynn with indispensable knowledge and skill to support bringing about positive change and we congratulate Everlynn and look forward to learning about her progress.

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Federated States of Micronesia

Two doctors (Tholman Alik from Kosrae and Dr. James Yaingeluo from Pohnpei) have completed the Black Dog Institute Depressive/Bipolar Disorder Training and are now on their second phase of their training. Congratulations to our National Focal Contact, Dr Imaculada Gonzaga-Optaia who has just completed the postgraduate forensic psychiatry specialty certification course with Whitireia Polytech Community on a WHO fellowship. We were fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with her during part of this fellowship in Wellington in March and made good use of this time, completing the HR and Training Plan and refining the mental health policy for FSM.

Vanuatu

The mental health service in Vanuatu has been very active:

- The mental health unit was integrated with NCD, injury and substances
- A policy paper has been drafted regarding alcohol and health promotion legislation
- START (Suicide Trend At-Risk Training), which involves creating partnerships within the Government, church groups, NGOs who could combine efforts in identifying and reporting suicide cases.
- Community awareness through Foundation of the South Pacific's Youth Mental Health Project
- Pacific Drug and Alcohol Network meeting
- 15,000 alcohol leaflets, 15,000 mental health leaflets and 10,000 cannabis leaflets were distributed after being translated into Bislamar
- For the first time, the mental health structure is incorporated into the new Ministry of Health structure, which will be implemented next year.

Congratulations to Peter Kaloris who has completed the one year International Diploma on Mental Health Law and Human Rights. Peter's thesis topic was Review Report on the Mental Hospital Act of Vanuatu.

Fiji

During 2010, each month the community mental health outreach was attended by an average of 150 people. During January, the Community Mental Health Team launched the Suva City Crime Free / Family Support Network Initiative which was attended by 50 people.

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Fiji – Youth Champs



Fiji – Youth Champs

A mental health and suicide prevention youth camp was organised and attended by 17 people. Training has been conducted including:

- Training of 13 public health nurses
- Mental health awareness and suicide prevention in-service training at St Giles Hospital
- Response Abilities Pathways training for attending to at-risk youth

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- Drug and substance abuse awareness training
- Basic suicide prevention training
- Rotary Club mental health awareness
- Stress management for St Giles Hospital staff
- Prison medical orderlies mental health training (13 people)
- Family support network training
- Clinics and training by visiting psychiatrists in the central division

Fiji has also been active facilitating activities that increase mental health awareness, including a Churchwood Youth Programme which was attended by 30 people; an art exhibition which included works by 15 mental health patients which has so far been attended by 700 people; Church Youth Group attended by 75 people.

Public Service Week was held during May and a mental health booth was attended by 770 people over three days.

In June, the Solicitor-General Office finalised the Mental Health Decree which will now go to Cabinet for endorsement during July 2010.

Solomon Islands

Training continues and is described further on in this newsletter.

Daniel Gaiofa Oikali will be completing the International Diploma in Mental Health Law and Human Rights this year.

Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention

The Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention has been engaged in a project on suicide in the Pacific Islands for the past few years. This project is called Suicide Trends in At-Risk Territories (START) and aims to establish basic level monitoring systems to record suicide (both deaths and attempts). It also involves a simple intervention for those who attempt suicide. Currently, those Pacific Islands actively involved in the study include:

Tonga
Vanuatu
Fiji
Guam
PNG
French Polynesia.

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A webpage for the study is on the WPRO site:

<http://www.wpro.who.int/sites/start/>

The Institute would like to collaborate with other people in the hope of progressing a suicide research and intervention agenda in the WPRO region.

The Asia-Pacific Regional conference of the International Association for Suicide Research and Prevention (IASP) will be held in Brisbane, Australia from the 17th to the 20th of November 2010. This is hosted by the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP) and Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA).

The conference will have a focus on progressing an understanding of the contextual, psychological and cultural influences on suicide in the Western Pacific. It will also provide an opportunity to share knowledge about prevention initiatives.

The conference will be held at the Sofitel Hotel, Brisbane from the 17th-20th November, 2010. More information on abstract submission and registration can be found at:

<http://www.suicideprevention2010brisbane.org/default.asp>

<http://www.suicideprevention2010brisbane.org/default.asp>

For more information, please contact the Conference Managers:

4th Asia Pacific Regional Conference of the International Association of Suicide Prevention

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Human Resource and Training Plans

All countries now have a completed Human Resource and Training Plan and in-country training is progressively occurring.

Solomon Islands

An English psychiatrist, Dr Sophie Thomson, was engaged through the Royal College of Psychiatry volunteer program to conduct mental health training in the Solomon Islands in September / October 2009. The placement had two main

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objectives. The first was to train nurses and nurse aides in Honiara and Malaita provinces on how to diagnose, treat and support people with mental health problems; the second was to support senior mental health staff on how to take community care forward by supporting senior staff. A total of 31 nurses completed two modules each of two weeks covering basic concepts of mental health assessment and management. Approximately half were from the main inpatient unit in Honiara, 8 were regional coordinators in mental health; and several each from the nursing school and the prison service. Two further modules were taught to 33 nurse aides who were based at both the National Psychiatric Service in the Malaita province and the National Referral Hospital in Honiara.

The second part of the placement to promote community mental health care involved regular weekly team meetings and included the development of professional development plans for senior staff and reaching agreement that the next stage of community care should focus on good documentation, reduction of suicide rate, reduction of readmission rate for severe mental illness by following up all discharged patients and advocacy with stakeholders in Honiara as well as the provinces.

Dr Ashok Singh, an English psychiatrist, conducted further training in the Solomon Islands between March – May 2010. Training involved developing clinical skills with psychiatrists and senior nurses to improve diagnosis, prescribing, psychosocial rehabilitation and psycho-social education with patients and families through joint consultations (including home and prison visits). Management skills were also taught to psychiatrists and senior nurses to promote skills required for the service such as chairing regular meetings with the Director of Mental Health.

The Solomon Islands also requested specific training for senior nurses in suicide, psychopathology and the mental health examination, pharmacological treatment and side effects, management of violence and aggression, legal aspects of mental health and legislation, psychosexual medicine. Twelve medical directors were provided with training on assessment and management of deliberate self-harm and suicide prevention, and management of acutely disturbed behaviour.

Vanuatu

During September / October 2009, the second phase of training to develop the skills of primary health workforce in mental health was completed. This training involved the same two consultants who were engaged earlier in 2009 and first,

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involved providing support and mentoring to the initial group provided with mental health training in March 2009. Brief mental health training was also provided to the military. The second part of this phase of the training involved the provision of teaching to a combined group of social services personnel and nurses from the outlying islands. This group included three nurses from Santo, one nurse from Malekula, one nurse from Torba, one nurse aid from Erakor, one nurse from the Department of Health, a chief from an NGO in Santo, a senior Education department administrator, a Correctional Services Officer and the Senior Sergeant of Police.

Four people from the initial group trained (a nurse in charge of emergency at Port Vila Hospital; one person from the Department of Health; and two health promotion officers for NGOs) were taught teaching skills and were involved in delivering some of the training to the new group of participants. The aim of this training was to ensure a workforce of mental health professionals in Vanuatu who are self-sustainable for teaching others in the future, doing research and supporting each other.

Progress with new projects / donor funding

PIMHnet is continuing to work with donor agencies, including NZAID, to secure financial support for our work. We will contact all PIMHnet members via email once support has been confirmed.

Please contact us if you have questions or you need further information:

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