

# Child Mental Health Challenges in Ghana

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# Outline

- Activities (Teaching and Psychological Assessment)
- Major Diagnosis
- Child and adolescent mental health services infrastructure in Ghana
- What are the competing issues?
- Addressing Stigma in Ghana
- Role of professionals and other stakeholders



# Reflections

**I HEAR AND I FORGET.  
I SEE AND I REMEMBER.  
I DO AND I UNDERSTAND.**

**— CONFUCIUS**



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# What do I do and Understand?



# Activities

- Geisha “Obaatanpa DJ” Radio Programme
- GSPH 463 – Psychological Influences on Health
- GSPH 467 – Adolescent Health: Social and Behavioral Perspectives
- GSPH 406 – Mental and Social Health Care
- Psychological Assessment



# Who is a Child?

- Ghana adopts the WHO definitions:
  - ✓ Health
  - ✓ Children
  - ✓ Youth
- Child: Birth to 18 years
- Youth: Between 15 to 24 years
- Young people: 10 to 24 years



# Assessment (January, 2012 – March, 2015)

- Children Referred for Clinical Psychological Services.
- **Tests Administered**
  - ✓ Bender Gestalt Test
  - ✓ Progressive Matrices
  - ✓ Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)
  - ✓ Comprehensive Test of Non-verbal Intelligence
  - ✓ Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder Test
  - ✓ Early Childhood Attention Deficit Disorder Evaluation Scale
  - ✓ Child Autism Rating Scale



# Major Diagnosis

- Cerebral Palsy
- Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)
- Intellectual Disability





# Conference Presentation (April, 2015)

- Neuro-developmental patterns in children living in Accra: Implications for Health and Education sectors in Ghana.



# Mental Health Service Infrastructure in Ghana



- Mental health services at most levels of care.
- Majority of care is provided through specialized psychiatric hospitals.
  - ✓ Accra Psychiatric Hospital
  - ✓ Pantang, Accra
  - ✓ Ankaful, Cape Coast
  - ✓ Department of Psychiatry, University of Ghana Medical School (UGMS)



# Programmes

- School Health Programme (SHEP): children between 5 and 15 years in schools.
- Adolescent Health & Development (ADHD) programme: pre-adolescents (5-9 years) and young adults (20-24 years).





# Mental Health Law

- Mental Health Act (846 of 2012) passed in 2012
- ✓ Re-focussing the way mental health services are to be provided.
- ✓ Move from an institutional model to a community-based approach.
- ✓ The Act is also designed to combat stigma and discrimination against mentally ill people.



# Implementing the Law

- Mental Health Authority established in November 2013.



# Competing Issues

## Institutional Level

- Services underfunded.
- ✓ Only 1.4% of the health expenditure goes to mental health.
- ✓ Spending skewed towards urban areas.
- ✓ 18 psychiatrists
- ✓ 1,068 Registered Mental Health Nurses
- ✓ 19 Psychologists
- ✓ 72 Community Mental Health Officers
- ✓ 21 social workers working in mental health





# Other Issues

- Demands placed on children
- High competition for schools/programmes
- Poverty
- Conflict



# Issues of Stigma

- High rate of social stigma
- Families of people with mental illness hide them away from the public.
- Families and Courtesy Stigma



# Addressing Stigma in Ghana

- Advocacy by BasicNeeds Ghana (a mental health and development advocacy organisation).
- Anti-stigma interventions must be a priority for health policy.
- Demystifying mental illness



- Improving knowledge about mental health.
- Positive attitudes toward individuals with mental health challenges.
- Integrate mental health team into primary care.



# Going Forward...

People in Ghana  
desperately need  
more **mental  
health** services



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Making mental  
health **accessible**  
to all



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- Delays in early detection, treatment and support can cause:
  - ✓ Distress
  - ✓ Increase the risk of relapse
  - ✓ Can be harmful for the **individual and their friends; family and carers.**



# All on Board

- Professionals
- Community
- Cultural Leaders
- Religious Leaders





- Safeguarding child and adolescent mental health begins with parents, families, schools, communities and practitioners.



# All of us as Collaborators on Board



**Thanks for your attention**



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