



A team approach to providing mental health services in a regional centre using a comprehensive primary health care framework

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Abstract

This paper discusses innovative mental health work being provided in a regional community health centre where values, setting and a wellbeing model have challenged traditional understandings of specialised mental health care. Comprehensive primary health care is a universal approach that transcends traditional boundaries; however, its value is often not appreciated in developed countries where technology and economics can limit its potential. Indigenous Health workers and Women's Health workers have long understood that psychiatric diagnosis is not always helpful for some of the people who access their services, and have developed ways of working that are respectful and empowering without the use of diagnostic labels. In Murray Mallee Community Health Service (MMCHS), a Health and Wellbeing Team was established, combining Aboriginal Health workers, Women's Health workers and Mental Health workers. Through strategic planning, a common philosophy and values base was developed. Some of the outcomes have been programs within limited resources and partnerships across health disciplines. Workers' skills and confidence have increased in every area with the resulting understanding that 'mental health is everybody's business'. This paper presents a brief historical overview of primary health care, outlines the MMCHS model, and calls for policy to be formulated and implemented in the comprehensive primary health care framework.

Keywords

primary health care, mental health services, mental health promotion, consumers, recovery