



Mental Health and HIV/AIDS

“Identification of mental health care services available in organizations providing care for people living with HIV/AIDS”

“Mental health care component in VCT services”

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The poster presents two related studies conducted as part of the project “Developing HIV/AIDS & Mental Health Programs in EU countries - MAIDS” co-financed by EAHC in 10 countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia).

The study “IDENTIFICATION OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES AVAILABLE IN ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING CARE FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS”

was conducted in 10 EU countries (BU, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, PL, RO, SL, SI) in 2010-2011.

OBJECTIVES:

The study was aimed at: identification of mental health related services accessible in three types of facilities providing care for PLHA (**Centers for HIV counselling & testing (VCT centers)**, ARV therapy Centres and other organizations providing mental health care and support for PLHA); description of structural and organisational issues of provided services, i.e. their accessibility, scope, financing etc. with a stress on provided mental health care.

METHODS:

The research was based on a questionnaire distributed among 340 facilities in ten project countries out of which 146 responded. Among them 105 facilities (72%) reported providing HIV testing, 110 (75%) - HIV pre-test counselling, 103 (71%) - HIV post-counselling. Around 50% reported having established procedures of referrals to mental health care: only for people with HIV - 78 (53%) and for all patients and clients with emotional and psychological problems - 70 (48%).

RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS:

On the basis of the conclusions derived from the research study, certain recommendations to increase the effectiveness of these facilities were formulated:

1. Regional spread: in several countries participating in the study improving the regional coverage of facilities for people living with HIV/AIDS is an important issue.
2. Working hours: to increase flexibility of opening hours in order to make facilities accessible outside usual working hours.
3. Specialists of mental health care: increasing the employment of mental health specialists in facilities providing care for people living with HIV/AIDS; especially psychiatrists and, depending on countries' needs, also professionals specialised in addiction treatment.
4. Referral to mental health care: developing guidelines for facilities in order for them to establish procedures for referral to mental health care services for people living with HIV/AIDS and for people with mental disorders.
5. Specialised mental health services: increasing the scope of mental health care services in facilities and developing forms of group therapy.
6. Support groups: development of support groups for people living with HIV/AIDS and their families/partners and support groups for other target groups. It is necessary to pay special attention to support groups for people with mental disorders.
7. Financing: facilities specialising in care for people living with HIV/AIDS should be provided with stable funding, including funding for somatic, mental and social care and support. Special training in applying for grants and other funding, both from national, EU and other sources should be provided.
8. Networking: increasing co-operation between organizations working in the area of care for people living with HIV/AIDS and those working in related fields. Supporting projects and programmes provided by more than one facility. Developing systemic solutions promoting co-operation instead of competition between organizations providing care to people living with HIV/AIDS and related fields.

The study “MENTAL HEALTH CARE COMPONENT IN VCT SERVICES”

was a small scale study on mental health and HIV related needs and the satisfaction level of clients of a VCT Center run in Warsaw (Poland) by SKA, it was implemented in November-December, 2011.

OBJECTIVES:

The pilot study *Mental health care component in VCT services* was aimed at verifying the need for the extension of the scope of VCT services, i.e. whether VCT center clients perceive a need in additional psychological support/psychiatric care (not related to HIV-testing) and whether VCT center is the right place for providing such services.

METHODS:

The study was based on an anonymous questionnaire for VCT center clients (59 completed questionnaires) in which they could name additional services they would like to be offered at VCT center, including consultation of a psychologist (not in connection with HIV-testing), psychiatrist etc. and self-assess their state of mental health.

RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS:

Respondents were highly satisfied with the VCT center services; according to respondents, consultants positively influenced the behavior of over 50% of clients (lowered their anxiety and motivated to avoid risky behavior in future). The research also revealed a need in psychological support, 30% of the participants admitted a need for regular contact with psychologist and over 50% of them declared that they are ready to pay for the visit. 20% would like to consult a sexologist. On the other hand, almost nobody was interested in seeing a psychiatrist, what is obviously related to negative perception of psychiatric care in Poland in general.

For detailed information on the research, please refer to <https://mentalhealthHIV.eu>

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