



Institut National de Santé Publique, d'Épidémiologie Clinique et de Toxicologie

POLICY BRIEF

MENTAL HEALTH AXIS

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Title: Mental Health in Lebanon**Authors:** Obeid S, Hallit S, Sacre H, Hajj A, Salameh P**SUMMARY**

Mental Health treatment in the 21st century generally involves a coordination amongst several healthcare professionals drawn from different disciplines: psychiatrists who have the role of making a diagnosis and prescribing drug treatment and clinical psychologists who are often called upon to handle assessment work (psychological and cognitive testing), as well as psychotherapy.

Based on evidence, INSPECT-LB produced recommendations regarding several aspects of the mental health system, beginning with awareness among mental health professionals, to several other aspects including the continuing education for professionals, management of drug treatment, prevention and therapeutic programs.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS/MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH

- Spread awareness among mental health professionals and researchers to use validated questionnaires (Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale - PANSS) to estimate the overall severity of schizophrenia among schizophrenic patients in Lebanon.
- Spread awareness among mental health professionals and researchers to use validated questionnaires (Montgomery-Asberg Depression Rating Scale & Hamilton Depression Rating Scale) to estimate the overall severity of depression among depressive patients in Lebanon.
- Inform and educate mental health professionals of prevalence of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) in patients with Schizophrenia and help them to recognize that the existence of OCD may affect the social relationship quality of life and the memory functioning of these patients.
- Inform mental health professionals that psychosis can be considered a severity index in bipolar disorder, with decreased severity and overall clinical improvement and remission taking place in response to pharmacotherapy.
- Spread awareness among mental health professionals concerning factors affecting the Quality of Life (QOL) among patients with Addiction and inform them that strategic interventions are needed to manage the health-related QOL in those with substance abuse.
- Help mental health professionals understand correlation factors and predict discriminatory attitudes to assist policy makers in addressing the problem of homophobia with evidence-based solutions.
- Spread awareness among mental health professionals concerning the correlation between dysfunctional cognitive schemas, developed during childhood and adolescence, and the development of the Stockholm syndrome in female victims of beating into domestic violence.
- Inform mental health professionals about the factors that influence the excessive use of cosmetics to hide underlying problems. These factors will then be taken into consideration in the psychotherapeutic care of patients who present themselves in therapy for dissatisfaction with the image of oneself.

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

Acknowledging the importance of mental health and well-being and talking about anxiety, depression, distress or any other form of mental illness that is common and can be treated, is of paramount importance. The first step is not to let stigma prevent the request for help from a health professional. Good mental health results in better physical health, improved productivity, lesser strain on the family, and a better quality of life.

Background and Outcomes

Several projects were addressed and published to increase awareness, improve therapeutic modalities and promote prevention methods for subjects at risk of mental illness or psychological problems.

Epidemiologic studies:

Different clinical scales used by Mental Health Professionals are not validated within the Lebanese population. Hence, the value of validating clinical scales. In this context, several validations were undertaken.

- Validation of the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS) and sociodemographic factors associated with Lebanese depressed patients
- Validation of the Arabic version of the Montgomery–Åsberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS) among Lebanese patients with depression showed that the Arabic versions of the HDRS and MADRS have promising psychometric properties, making them a good tool to use for the diagnosis of patients with depression. Depression recognition and treatment in general practice with the aim of improving patient outcome and reducing health care expenditure, is definitely warranted.
- Validation of the Arabic Version of the PANSS scale among Lebanese schizophrenic patients that shows that the Arabic version of the PANSS has promising psychometric properties, and thus it is a good tool to use for the diagnosis of patients with schizophrenia.

Studies on Mental illnesses

Mental Health research relieves significant distress and improves quality of life. It also benefits the whole society by generating social and economic benefits that contribute to thriving communities built upon resilience, reduced levels of mental ill-health and less stigma and discrimination. Thus, it is important to support a wide range of research studies that examine the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of mental illness conditions. Research helps to understand mental health and find ways to prevent it and treat it early.

- Prevalence of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder in Patients with Schizophrenia and Outcome on Positive and Negative Symptoms, Cognition, and Quality of Life. The objectives were to examine the prevalence of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) in hospitalized patients with schizophrenia and to compare the clinical, cognitive, and functional characteristics of schizophrenia patients with and without OCD. The prevalence of OCD in patients with schizophrenia was 3.2%. An increase in patients having a mild β was significantly associated with higher social relationship score and the Memory Functioning Scale–Informant (MFS-I) version. OCD did not affect the positive and negative symptoms of these patients. The prevalence of OCD in these patients was low (3.2%). Schizophrenia patients with and without OCD have comparable clinical profiles with few exceptions.
- Impact of psychosis in bipolar disorder during manic episodes. Results showed that psychosis was associated with higher scores on the mania scale and positive and negative syndrome scale (increased symptoms severity), compared to non-psychotic patients. Both groups demonstrated clinical improvement and remission, with scores amongst psychotic patients remaining higher. Groups were similar in symptomatology except with regards to psychotic symptoms (the content,

insight, delusions, hallucinations, grandiosity, poor rapport, unusual thoughts). In conclusion, psychosis can be considered a severity index in bipolar disorder, with decreased severity and overall clinical improvement and remission taking place in response to pharmacotherapy.

- Identification of Factors Affecting the Quality of Life Among Patients with Addiction in Lebanon. The objective was to assess factors associated with the physical and mental quality of life (QOL) in the Lebanese population. Results showed that females compared with males and having a family history of substance use disorder were associated with lower physical QOL and having a generalized anxiety disorder with suicidal ideation were associated with lower mental QOL.

Studies on social problems/issues

It is imperative to study social problems to improve the perception of problems within the community and devise strategies that would improve, or even eliminate the issues that affect populations.

- Correlates of Homophobic Attitudes in Lebanon: Results of a Cross-Sectional Study. The objective of the study was to assess homophobic attitudes toward gay and lesbian persons and examine how those negative attitudes contributed to risk factors that may impact gay and lesbian persons among a sample of Lebanese individuals. Results showed that an increase in intense homophobia would significantly increase the odds of emotion focused engagement and decrease the problem focused engagement. Furthermore, knowing someone gay, university education level, high monthly income and higher problem-focused engagement subscale would significantly decrease the total homophobic score.
- Correlation of the Stockholm Syndrome and Early Maladaptive Schemas Among Lebanese Women Victims of Beating into Domestic/Marital Violence. This study assessed the role of the Stockholm syndrome at the level of activation of early maladaptive schemas in women that are victims of marital violence. Results revealed that having a severe level of fusion, a moderate level of dependence on the partner, and being beaten in a frequency of multiple times per month were associated with higher Stockholm Syndrome scores; and having a moderate level of fusion and a moderate and severe level of sacrifice were associated with lower Stockholm Syndrome scores.
- Relationship Between Cosmetics Use, Self-Esteem, and Self-Perceived Attractiveness Among Lebanese Women. The objective was to assess the variables related to the usage of cosmetic products among a representative sample of the Lebanese population, including self-perception, facial attractiveness satisfaction, body image, and self-esteem. The results showed that an increase in the self-esteem score and being of Muslim religion compared with Christianity were significantly associated with lower cosmetic usage score. On another hand, an increase in the appearance orientation score and having a high and an intermediate socioeconomic status compared with a low one were associated with a higher cosmetic usage score respectively. These results can open a window to other studies that might consider the relationship between personality traits, depression, and anxiety with the frequency of makeup use.

Conclusion

All aforementioned projects were conducted by the mental health axis of INSPECT-LB; many other projects are already submitted to peer reviewed journals and some are still ongoing.

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