

**IMPROVEMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH STATUS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS  
THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION****Dr. Amit Kumar Mishra\***

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**ABSTRACT**

WHO defines Health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.<sup>[1]</sup> As per the definition there are three dimensions of health, physical, mental and social, which need equal attention while considering health of an individual. But, the physical health is always given priority over the others and mental health is being always neglected.

Non-communicable diseases (NCD) have overtaken communicable diseases as a leading cause of mortality.<sup>[2]</sup> In India, WHO estimates the burden of mental health problems as 2,443 DALYs/ 100,000 population, and the age-adjusted suicide rate of 21.1/100,000 population.<sup>[3]</sup> As per the National Mental Health Survey 2015-16 (NMHS), the life time prevalence of any mental disorder was 13.7%. The survey showed that one in 20 people in India suffer from depression. As per NMHS estimates 15 crore people are in need of active interventions for mental illness and there are just 0.3 psychiatrists, 0.07 psychologists, and 0.07 social workers per 100,000 people in India.<sup>[4]</sup>

WHO has recommended doctor to population ratio of 1:1,000, the ratio in 2017 for India was 0.77:1000 and the projected ratio for 2024 is 1.03:1000.<sup>[5]</sup> As Primary Health Centres (PHCs) are the centres which are man-powered with health professionals, they are overburden to provide health services as per the different National Health Programmes to the community members. Mental health services are also a component of primary health care but mostly it is health centre oriented. Except very few most of the mental health research are mainly focused on services through the health centres by the overburdened health professionals/workers. In this setting, it is required to innovate a method/ technique to deal or help the mental health issues of community members through their own participation at the community level.

A solution to this might be “Community Health Improvement Centres (CHIC)” in each village – a centre through which the mental health could be promoted and help the community members to seek medical help during the need. CHIC can be established in the available

space in the villages such as Anganwadi Centres, Panchayat Office, and Schools etc with proper permission which is accessible and acceptable to all. An educated volunteer preferably the school teacher, from the local community who is reliable and acceptable by all can take care of the CHIC and bridge the gap between the health workers/professionals and community members. They will get proper training from the health professionals on mental health promotion, early identification of symptoms & signs of mental health problems and counselling services. With the help of the local health workers such as Anganwadi Worker, Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) and Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM), they will conduct regular health promotion activities in the CHIC for the community members irrespective of the mental health status and also help in follow up/ referral services for those with mental health issues. The volunteers can be paid an honorarium like other health workers for providing such services at CHIC. All the community members irrespective of the mental health status can visit and enjoy the services of CHIC.

The above idea needs to be reviewed and tested by intervention trials. If the results will be in favour of CHIC then it could help to reduce the burden of mental health problems with minimum resources.

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