

# Women and Mental Health

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# Background

- Mental illness is associated with a significant burden of morbidity and disability.
- Lifetime prevalence rates for any kind of psychological disorder are higher than previously thought, are increasing in recent cohorts and affect nearly half the population.
- Despite being common, mental illness is under diagnosed by health professionals.
- Patients, too, appear reluctant to seek professional help. Only 2 in every 5 people experiencing a mood, anxiety or substance use disorder seeking assistance in the year of the onset of the disorder.
- Overall rates of psychiatric disorder are almost identical for men and women but striking gender differences are found in the patterns of mental illness.

# Why Gender?

- Gender is a critical determinant of mental health and mental illness. The morbidity associated with mental illness has received substantially more attention than the gender specific determinants and mechanisms that promote and protect mental health and foster resilience to stress and adversity.
- Gender differences occur particularly in the rates of common mental disorders - depression, anxiety and somatic complaints. These disorders, in which women predominate, affect approximately 1 in 3 people in the community and constitute a serious public health problem.
- Unipolar depression, predicted to be the second leading cause of global disability burden by 2020, is twice as common in women.

# Gender specific stressors

- Gender specific risk factors for common mental disorders that disproportionately affect women include
  - gender based violence,
  - Early marriage
  - Harmful traditional practices
  - socioeconomic disadvantage,
  - low income and income inequality,
  - low or subordinate social status and rank and
  - unremitting responsibility for the care of others.

# Women's mental health

- Depressive disorders account for close to 41.9% of the disability from neuropsychiatric disorders among women compared to 29.3% among men.
- Leading mental health problems of the elderly are depression, organic brain syndromes and dementias. A majority are women.
- An estimated 80% of 50 million people affected by violent conflicts, civil wars, disasters, and displacement are women and children.
- Lifetime prevalence rate of violence against women ranges from 16% to 50%.
- At least one in five women suffer rape or attempted rape in their lifetime.

# Burden of Mental Illness in Ethiopia

Mental health problem	Percent Prevalence
Common Mental Disorders	12-17%
Schizophrenia	0.6-0.7%
Mood disorders	3.8-5%
Childhood disorders	12-24%
Substance dependence	4.0%
Problem drinking	2.7-3.7%
Khat abuse	22-64%
Suicide attempt	0.9-3.2%
Completed suicide	7.7/100,000/year

# Mental health service in Ethiopia

- There are 85 mental health outpatient facilities available in the country.
- There are two outpatient facilities that exclusively serve children and adolescents with mental health problems.
- 1 specialized psychiatric hospital
- 6 regional hospitals that provide inpatient service

# The mental health plan

- The ministry of health is preparing a national mental health strategic plan.
- Mental health will be one of the priority programs in HSDP IV
- Preparation is under way to establish a national institute of mental health
- Integration into the existing health facilities-in service training

# Capacity building

- Psychiatric Nursing training at Amanuel
- BSc training in three universities
- MSc in clinical and community psychiatry
- Post graduate level training of physicians

# Advocacy and social mobilization

- There are 3 mental health advocacy groups
  - Mental Health Society of Ethiopia
  - Association to provide legal support to the mentally ill
  - National Mental Health Initiative
- Health Extension Program
  - Mental health is included in the urban HEP
  - Mental health is part of the level IV curriculum of rural HEP

Thank You