

Quality Rights in Kabul Mental Health Hospital.

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Abstract

To assess the quality of mental health services and human rights condition in the Kabul Mental Health Hospital (KMHH) and provide recommendations for development of an improvement plan and to update and revise the National Mental Health Policy, Strategy and Plan.

The assessment was conducted in January 2015 in the KMHH and the Burn Ward of Isteqlal Tertiary Hospital by a multidisciplinary team using WHO Quality Rights Tool Kit. Before the assessment, Institutional Review Board approval and informed consent from each interviewee were obtained. Interviews were conducted with 16 service users, 17 hospital staffs and 7 family members in addition to documents review and observation of inpatient units of KMHH plus interpersonal interactions between hospital staff and service users. The assessment committee reviewed the documentation and observed the Burn Ward of Isteqlal Tertiary hospital in order to measure and compare parity between the two facilities. After the assessment, all committee members gathered and synchronized all findings into a final report.

There were some serious gaps on service provision level and respecting human rights of service users and their family members. A series of policies, guidelines and procedures related to patients' human rights were absent. Inadequate treatment environment and standard of living, poor quality of care and services, violations of the right to exercise legal capacity and personal liberty, being chemically and physically (e.g. chain) restrained, being exposed to verbal, physical and emotional abuse, and emphasis on institutional treatment were all extensive human rights violation that service users were experiencing in KMHH.

The available services for mental health service users are questionable due to mistrust and lack of awareness about rights of people with disabilities and need to be positively changed. Existing Mental Health Act has a large number of disparities with the CRPD and requires revision and adaptation in accordance to CRPD.

Key words: *Quality Rights Tool Kit, Kabul Mental Health Hospital, CRPD, Human rights, Mental Health Act*

Introduction

Mental well-being makes up an integral part of an individual's capacity to lead a fulfilling life, including the ability to form relationships, study and work or pursue leisure interests, as well as to make day-to-day decisions and choices. Disturbances to an individual's mental well-being, which can come about as a result of complex interaction between biological, social and psychological factors, lead not only to diminished functioning for affected persons but also broader losses at the household and societal level.

People with mental disabilities and substance abuse problems are exposed to poor-quality of care and violations of their human rights throughout the world.

The growing number of people with mental disabilities in the world has further contributed to a level of attention paid to quality and human rights conditions in both outpatient and inpatient facilities, which has never been greater. Persons with disabilities need both de jure human rights protection and de facto human rights practices.

Unfortunately, most of the worst human rights violations and discriminations are experienced by persons with mental and/or intellectual disabilities in health care facilities especially in mental health in-patient care facilities. They are receiving treatment without informed consent and in many cases receiving treatment against their wishes. Therefore, assessment of mental health facilities can help us to identify problems existing in routine care practices and to develop effective plan for ensuring that the services are of good quality, respectful of human rights, responsive to the users' requirements and promote users' autonomy and dignity. In another hand, the results of an assessment of quality and human rights can ensure future policies, planning and legislative reform to respect and promote human rights.

In August 2006 the General Assembly of UN adopted the first UN convention enshrining the rights of persons with disabilities through the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD is the first human rights convention of the 21st century and the first legally binding instrument with comprehensive rights and protections for individuals with disabilities including those with mental and intellectual disabilities.

Based on the CRPD the World Health Organization has developed Quality Rights Tool Kit- a tool to assess quality and human rights in mental health and social care facilities and to unite and empower people to improve the quality of care and promote human rights in mental health facilities and social care homes. This tool kit covers five specific human rights themes including: the rights to adequate standards of living and social protection, the rights to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, the right to exercise legal capacity and personal liberty, freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, punishment and exploitation, violence and abuse and finally the rights to live independently and be included in the community.

The main interest focus of the present study is to discover the perceptions of service users, family members and staff on the impact of quality health services and respect of human rights on service users' treatment and recovery.

Methodology

A descriptive cross-sectional design through which information is collected at a specific point of time by performing interview with clients, review of health facility documentation and observation of the facility. The target group in this study was composed of three categories: service users, family members and hospital staff (male and female) of Kabul Mental Health Hospital. All interviewees were selected randomly by the assessment committee and not the facility. Based on the information obtained from Kabul Mental Health Hospital, in average 45-50 beds were occupied by service users on monthly basis.

According to the Quality Rights Tool Kit, the formula for determining sample size for interviews is as follows:

- If only six service users are receiving services from a facility, all of them should be interviewed (100%).
- If there are 16 service users, eight should be interviewed (50%) at a minimum.
- If there are 40 service users or more, at least 12 should be interviewed (approximately 30%).
- The number of interviews to be conducted with family members can be determined by halving the number of interviews planned with service users.
- The numbers of staff can be selected on the basis of the same proportions used for service users.

Only in-bed mental health service users including voluntarily and involuntarily admitted and stable adult males and females with different diagnoses, age and length of stay, staff of Kabul Mental Health Hospital and relatives/family members, those who visited service users admitted in the course of the month that the study was conducted, were included in interview.

Service users with acute episodes of mental disorders whom do not have decision making capacity or insight, patients from OPD unit, age group below 14 years old (because the hospital is not admitting service users below 14 years of age) and family members of mental health OPD service users were excluded from interview process.

The Quality Rights Toolkit assessment conducted in Kabul Mental Health Hospital through 40 interviews with hospital staff, service users and family members, in addition to observation and reviewing of hospital documents and physical structure. Also, it includes findings from observation and document review of compared health facility (Burn Ward of Isteqlal Tertiary Hospital). The assessment was conducted in January 2015 in both facilities by a multidisciplinary team of 10 people composed of the author, two psychiatrists, two lawyers, two clinical psychologists, one psychologist, a sociologist, a public mental health practitioner and one recovered previous service user of Kabul Mental Health Hospital. At the beginning, there was one family member in the training of assessment committee but unfortunately, he didn't join during the assessment process. Before the assessment, we obtained IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval and through an official letter from MoPH authorities to the directors of both hospitals, we got the permission to conduct the assessment in both facilities. Also, before the interviews we received informed consent from each interviewee. Through this assessment we completed 40 interviews with 16 service users, 17 hospital staffs and 7 family members using WHO Quality Rights Toolkit interview tool. The assessment team also conducted the documents review and observation of in-patient units of Kabul Mental Health Hospital plus interpersonal interactions between hospital staff and service users using WHO Quality Rights Toolkit documentation and observation tool. The assessment committee reviewed the documentation and observed Burn ward of Isteqlal Tertiary hospital in order to measure and compare parity between the two facilities. After the assessment, all committee members gathered and synchronized all findings into a final report using WHO Quality Rights Facility-Based Assessment Report.

Results

The following table represents the results of scoring of each theme (based on interviews, review of documents, and observation) which was conducted in Kabul Mental Health Hospital and Burn Ward of Isteqlal Tertiary Hospital. These results came out after tough discussions and consensus between the assessment team members:

Brief overview of the findings for each theme		
Themes	Rating	
	Kabul Mental Health Hospital	Burn Ward of Isteqlal Hospital
Theme 1: The right to an adequate standard of living (Article 28 of the CRPD)	Achievement initiated (A/I)	Achievement initiated (A/I)
Theme 2: The right to enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (Article 25 of the CRPD)	Achievement initiated (A/I)	Achievement initiated (A/I)

Brief overview of the findings for each theme		
Theme 3: The right to exercise legal capacity and the right to personal liberty and security of person (Articles 12 and 14 of the CRPD)	Not initiated (N/I)	Achievement initiated (A/I)
Theme 4: Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and from exploitation, violence and abuse (Articles 15 and 16 of the CRPD)	Achievement initiated (A/I)	Not initiated (N/I)
Theme 5: The right to live independently and be included in the community (Article 19 of the CRPD)	Not initiated (N/I)	Not initiated (N/I)

Discussion

The assessment conducted at Kabul Mental Health Hospital showed that there were some serious gaps both on service provision level as well as respecting human rights of service users and their family members. In this facility, mostly human rights violation and discrimination against mental health service users are accepted as a common practice, which could be due to mistrust and lack of awareness about rights of people with disabilities. A series of policies, guidelines and procedures related to patients' human rights are absent. On the other hand, inadequate treatment environment and standard of living for mentally disabled people, poor quality of care and services for mental health service users, experiencing violations of the right to exercise legal capacity and personal liberty, being chemically (by medications) and physically (Chain, leather belts and even wristbands) restrained, being exposed to verbal, physical and emotional abuse, and increased emphasis on institutional treatment rather than assisting users to develop their abilities in order to recover and re-integrate into the community are all extensive human rights violation that service users are experiencing in Kabul Mental Health Hospital.

Assessment also revealed that hospitalized individuals in Kabul Mental Health Hospital did not receive the same standards of health care and respect for their rights as compared to individuals being hospitalized in Burn Ward of Isteqlal Tertiary Hospital. To overcome existing challenges, there is a serious need for both Kabul Mental Health Hospital and MoPH to start taking fundamental steps toward improving quality of care which incorporates human rights principles, protecting people's inherent dignity and changing classic behavior of healthcare providers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Afghanistan is among those countries that ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on September 2013 and is committed to its implementation. It means that all national laws related to disabilities will be revised in accordance to CRPD and assure patients' rights based on international conventions and treaties. Current assessment revealed that available services for mental health service users are questionable due to mistrust and lack of awareness about rights of people with disabilities and need to be positively changed. Additionally, existing mental health act which was developed on 1987 has significant disparities with CRPD on the rights of mental health service users and quality of services and requires revision and adaptation in accordance to CRPD. Also through this assessment in Kabul Mental Health Hospital, it has unmasked human rights violation and discrimination against mental health service users as an accepted practice.

Lack of an adequate treatment environment and standard of living for mentally ill people, not standardized and poor quality of services for mental health service users, experiencing violations of the right to exercise legal capacity and personnel liberty, being chemically (by medications) and physically (Chaining) restrained, being exposed to verbal, physical and mental abuse and more emphasized on institutional services rather than helping them to develop their abilities in order to recover and re-integrate into the community, all of them are extensive human rights violation and discriminations that mental health service users have being experiencing in Kabul Mental Health Hospital.

The suggestions and recommendations were made separately for Kabul Mental Health Hospital and MoPH in order to improve the condition. Firstly, a series of suggestions and recommendations are given to Kabul Mental Health Hospital in order to bring fundamental changes at management and administration level and processes. Also, based on findings of this assessment, they have to develop a practical operational plan and activities in order to improve quality of service and promote human rights in the facility. Although specific suggestions based on each theme, standards and criteria are proposed to Kabul Mental Health Hospital, the general recommendation is that mental health hospital should pay more attention and be more focused on management procedures, staff capacity building, coordination with relevant and related sectors, efficient service provision and effective monitoring in order to ensure quality improvement and promotion in human rights. Secondly, some suggestions and recommendations are addressed to MoPH as the policy-maker in order to bring changes and modifications to their laws, policies and strategies in light of CRPD. Certainly, a series of necessary actions such as changes and revisions in the laws, policies and strategies are needed in order to assure higher quality of health services and promotion of human rights of people with mental disabilities but revision of policies and legislations alone cannot bring changes to the issue of the real life; therefore, it should be practically implemented.

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Editor's note:

More information can be found in the doctoral dissertation in: Parwiz, K. (2015). Implementation of WHO Quality Rights assessment In Kabul Mental Health Hospital (Doctoral dissertation), which can be accessed here <https://run.unl.pt/handle/10362/16673>