

WAPR-Conference Norwegian Branch 2023

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The major theme on this annual conference in Bergen in May was welcoming communities. Citizens with mental health and substance abuse issues have for long reported on the need for and value of welcoming communities and belonging. We all need places and spaces where we feel wanted as well as needed. Places where we can contribute as well as meet fellow human beings and develop friendships. There is a need to put on the agenda how national and local governments and providers can support existing and facilitate new - open, cost-free and welcoming places, where citizens in all ages can meet. Theories and practices on these subjects were presented and discussed.

Central themes were social inequality and mental health, a welfare state under pressure, marginalization, social exclusion, and loneliness. Some data from the report “Rapid Review of inequalities in health and wellbeing in Norway since 2014” was presented (Rapid review of inequalities in health and wellbeing in Norway since 2014 - IHE (instituteofhealthequity.org)).

The Marmot Principles were also referred to. Eight policy

areas are defined by Sir Michael Marmot to promote health and wellbeing. These include early years development, employment, living standards, communities, ill-health prevention, discrimination, and environmental sustainability.

Experiences of local initiatives were shared. One was a community sports team, Psykiatraliansen. This is flexible everyday arena where anyone can become involved in physical activities without thresholds. Many citizens with mental health and substance abuse issues find this a very welcoming and supporting arena. They feel being supported in their recovery processes. The promotion of personal interests and skills, as well as social relationships and connectedness, are central features of this community sports team. All kinds of activities are offered; like football, swimming, yoga, zumba, climbing, hiking and fitness centers, to mention some. Most of the coaches and instructors are peers with key competence in the concrete sports.

Other experiences shares were related to community developments – how local communities can find ways to provide welcoming places. A Danish experience was presented offering insights into



ways of facilitating meaningful activities and inviting places as well as developing recovery-oriented services. From another initiative we learned about the value of the ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) method in community development. In some municipalities this is found useful within public health policies and practices and in other local developments. Co-creation and co-production

with citizens are key in these developments. ABCD is participatory and network-oriented, relational and strengths based.

The final part of the day was a workshop where we were invited to practice what we have learned.

WAPR-Indian Chapter Conference on Promoting Rights and Recovery in Persons with Mental Illness

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The 7th National Conference of World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation-Indian Chapter (WAPR-IC) organized by Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health (LG-BRIMH) and WAPR-IC was held on 17th and 18th March 2023. Recognizing the pressing need to recognize and promote the rights of persons with mental illness, 'Promoting Rights and Recovery of Persons with Mental Illness' was selected as the theme of the conference. The conference was attended by two hundred and eighty eight delegates who were mostly from India. The scientific sessions were spread over two days with plenary session, six workshops, sixteen symposia, two corporate sessions and a panel discussion. The 7th National Conference of World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation-Indian Chapter (WAPR-IC) aimed to provide a platform to all stakeholders of mental health to exchange knowledge, expertise and skill.

The theme symposium of the conference laid emphasis on deinstitutionalization and training in Quality Rights to facilitate changes in attitude, practices and services in psychosocial rehabilitation to empower stakeholders to promote rights and recovery. Role of WAPR in promoting the rights of persons with mental disorders and Community Network Approach were also extensively discussed.

The conference also paid tribute to Dr. Sharada Menon, the person instrumental in the founding of WAPR-IC. With a view to introduce and update the delegates on the models of psychosocial rehabilita-

tion for persons with mental illness and in particular homeless persons with mental illness, concurrent symposia were held. Discussions ranged from the tried and tested residential rehabilitation models like Richmond Fellowship Society, the MS Chellamuthu Trust, Medico Pastoral Association and Schizophrenia Research Foundation to the newer and emerging models like the Recovery Oriented Services (ROSeS) Café at NIMHANS Bengaluru that promotes domestic and livelihood skills. The role of work in recovery and rehabilitation of persons with mental illness was recounted historical account of 'Asylums' in India. Keeping in mind the contribution of community in the recovery of persons with mental illness, the conference also organized a symposium on the community based rehabilitation (CBR) which highlighted experiences of CBR in rural setting. While the delegate from Tamil Nadu shared the experience of training community workers, conducting awareness programs and family empowerment, delegates from Jharkhand shared insights into their community led mental health programs using the CHIME framework for facilitating recovery that includes tele psychiatry, home visits, counselling, support group meetings and enhancing social contact.

Family is an important stake holder in the treatment and recovery of persons with mental illness. Keeping this in context, deliberations were on helping families of persons with chronic mental illness. Citing evidence based family interventions, the presenters emphasized the need for designing intervention that