

PRESS RELEASE

Patna, March 9. National Conference on “Partnership to Scale up Mental Healthcare in Bihar” was organized today by the Centre for Health Policy at Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI) in collaboration with Department of Health Government of Bihar, Department of Social Welfare Government of Bihar, State Human Rights Commission and Bihar State Legal Services Authority.

Mr. Mangal Pandey, Health Minister, Govt. of Bihar in his inaugural address emphasized that the Bihar state need to develop its own health policy in order to move in right direction for future healthcare priority, such health policy must also be inclusive of mental health needs. He clearly stated that as discussed earlier, he will rely on suggestions of CHP, ADRI for developing such policy. The Health Minister also highlighted the needs to have healthy ‘Manas’ (Human resources) and healthy ‘Mind’ (mental health) for future development of the state. Dr. P.P. Ghosh, Director, CHP-ADRI in his welcome address also highlighted the urgent need for accelerating mental health interventions by the government and judiciary. Justice Samrendra Pratap Singh highlighted the legal aid work being done by the Bihar State legal services authority.

In the first Technical session, Prof. Suresh Bada Math, Professor of Psychiatry, NIMHANS, Bangalore spoke on innovative solutions for implementation of Mental Healthcare Act 2017. He highlighted that there is no need for conducting a new study to estimate the prevalence of mental illness as the National Mental Health Survey conducted by NIMHANS already provides a high prevalence of mental illness in the country, which is currently estimated to be around 10%. He further highlighted the need to utilize technological innovations for improving mental healthcare. This session was chaired by Dr. N. K. Sinha, State Programme Officer for Mental Health, State Health Society, Bihar.

In the second session ‘Methods to strengthen the National Mental Health’ Programme was discussed. Prof. Rajesh Kumar, Head of Psychiatry Department at IGIMS, Patna explained some of these methods for immediate implementation by the concerned authority. The Chair of the session Dr. Karuna Kumari, IAS, Additional Executive Director, State Health Society, Government of Bihar, said the state government will focus on mental health needs of the adolescent population.

In the third session, Dr. Soumitra Pathare Director of Centre for Mental Health Law and Policy at ILS Pune presented the work of a project called “Atmiyata”. This project aims at community mobilization through training self-help groups to connect person with a mental disorder to existing mental healthcare services and providing support and coping skills to their families. In the fourth session, Dr. K.V. Kishore Kumar Director of the Banyan and the Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health highlighted the urgent need for the establishment of aftercare services (rehabilitation and reintegration) for persons with a mental health condition. He urged the chair for the session, Dr. Shivaji Kumar, Commissioner, State Disability Commission, Bihar emphasized to focus on integration of Social welfare institution with Public health institution to address mental health needs of people.

Ms. Apurva Shristi, Legal Specialist at CHP, ADRI proposed vote of thanks and re-iterated commitment of CHP to work in this area.

Anjani Kumar Verma

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