

Development and use of mental health indicators

HMIS is a vital part of all health systems as it aims to provide reliable and timely information on treatment needs and resource demands on the health system. However, mental health indicators have not been used or evaluated in low and middle-income countries including Nepal. Therefore, the mental health indicators were developed and evaluated. Delphi method (which is a forecasting method based on the results of questionnaires sent to a panel of experts) was used for developing realistic and feasible mental health indicators for selecting 15 indicators which was then contextualized in Nepal with two rounds of consultation with experts. The indicators that were developed and implemented in 33 health facilities of Chitwan district of Nepal were: *new and old cases, referred by, diagnosis, severity, functioning, treatment, referral, treatment follow-up, payment for consultation and out of pocket costs.*

Mixed method along with qualitative interviews, record review checklist and quantitative checklist was applied during the study for evaluating the feasibility, utility and acceptability of the indicators.



Recommendations

- ✓ It could be integrated in the routine HMIS after minimizing technical complexities.
- ✓ Priority indicators that came through record reviews, health workers surveys and qualitative interviews are 'mental health diagnosis', 'intervention', 'treatment follow up', 'suicide rate' and 'medicine stock count's that could be integrated in national HMIS based on utility, feasibility and acceptability.
- ✓ The process of integration would speed up only if the government takes ownership in integrating mental health in primary health care.

Results

Record review

Completion: High levels of indicators being completed, at both time points, especially for diagnoses, severity and treatment (>80% both time points)

Accuracy of completed indicators: Accurateness in reporting increased over time for all of the indicators. 100% accuracy in end line.

Health Workers Survey

Applicability: Directly after training, we find very high scores (>90%) on importance, motivation, understandability, relevance and confidence.

Extra time: the majority of health workers spend <10 min on the additional indicators.

Qualitative Interviews

A number of positive factors reflect the importance of HMIS for mental health. According to them these indicators would help keep accounts of patients with mental health problems, including their demographics, diagnosis and intervention provided; it would help in mapping magnitude of mental health problem which would eventually help to design mental health programs accordingly; helps in figuring out stock of medicines that should be procured based on the burden of disease; helps in tracking the progress of patients receiving care and thus help in changing the treatment plan accordingly.

"If it is integrated in government HMIS, it would be easy for us. Reporting could be done through the HMIS itself. And we do not have to fill in extra form."

"Without data we won't know what's going on, we won't know the outcome of our work, we won't know if what we are doing has been giving desired result. It helps us to understand the ground reality. In addition, it helps us to know in what aspects improvement is necessary."