

MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN CHINA

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Executive summary

1. Mental health in China is a great concern to its leadership given the huge social and economic costs. People with mental problems have a higher likelihood of committing crimes and suicide. World Health Organization has warned that mental diseases will account for 15% of total global disease burden by 2020.
2. The one-month prevalence rate of adult mental disorder in China is about 17.5%. Over 170 million adults have one or more types of mental disorder. Of this, 16 million people are estimated to have serious mental diseases.
3. The prevalence rate is at a similar level compared to other countries. In the US, the one month prevalence rate is estimated at over 15%. However, for the Chinese case, under-treatment is a serious issue. Over 90% of patients with serious mental diseases have not been given proper medical treatment.
4. The cost of treating depression in China was estimated to be over RMB50 billion in 2002. Not only are people with mental disorders less likely (40%) to be employed, they are paid 30% lower than normal people in China.
5. Suicide rate in China is estimated to be between 20 and 30 per 100,000 people, which is very high by international average. Suicide is now the most significant reason for death between 19 and 34 years old in China. Over 60% of suicide cases are associated with mental disorders.
6. The utilization of mental health care services has increased by double digits in recent years. In 2011, outpatient visits for mental health care were over 27 million. The situation is aggravated by the lack of qualified doctors and the shortage of physical infrastructures such as wards and equipment, leading to many patients with mental disorders being under-treated and under-reported.

7. As a significant public health issue, the government has to do more in this aspect. Current government input for mental health in China accounts for less than 1% of total health expenditure. According to the 12th Five-Year Program, the Chinese government has increased its spending on the prevention and treatment of mental health care.
8. A national law for mental health like those adopted by 109 countries in the world is necessary to protect patients and promote mental health care. A draft of the National Mental Health Law has yet to be endorsed by the National People's Congress. The financial coverage of patients with mental diseases and relevant regulations for involuntary admission are still being debated.
9. Some important issues to be addressed in the future include firstly, the opportunistic behavior of both patients and suppliers of mental health care. Secondly, the lack of provision of mental health care for vulnerable groups such as youth and migrant workers is serious. Thirdly, the extraordinary high share of involuntary admitted patients should be reduced.