Capacity building partnerships with indigenous doctors and other mental health staff in Pacific contexts

DR JIMMY OBED (BY VIDEO), DR ALLISTER BUSH (WPA OCEANIA REPRESENTATIVE)
Dr Jimmy Obed - introduction
Background: Indigenous peoples

- UN estimates that there are 370 million indigenous people worldwide, living in 72 countries
- At least 5000 distinct peoples
- **In Oceania**
  - 798,400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia (2014 figures)
  - One in seven New Zealanders are Maori (598,605 in 2013)
  - 98% of 280,000 population in Vanuatu are ni-Vanuatu, and there are over 100 indigenous languages
  - Papua New Guinea has over 820 indigenous languages
- By far the majority of the 9 million people in Oceania who live outside of Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii and Guam are indigenous
World Psychiatric Association: 2017-2020 Action Plan

- **Impact on population groups** – strengthening the contribution of psychiatrists to reducing distress, illness and suicidal behaviour among vulnerable populations.

- **Enabling activities** – supporting psychiatrists to promote mental health and improve care capacity. These activities include: service development; awareness raising and advocacy; education, publications and research. All are conceived as gender- and culturally-sensitive.
Partnerships and collaboration – expanding the reach and effectiveness of partnerships with service beneficiaries including service users, their families, and their communities; primary health care professionals; and a range of governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations.
Oceania region
Vanuatu Psychiatry Mentorship Programme

- Dr Jimmy Obed
- Other Mentors: Dr Stephen Stathis, Dr Ernest Hunter
Dr Jimmy Obed - Vanuatu context
Vanuatu

- Population of 270,000
- One third of population aged 14 or under
- At least 80 islands - 65 are inhabited
- 105 indigenous languages
- National languages: Bislama, English, French
Vanuatu – mental health facilities

- Two national referral hospitals
- Two mental health beds in each hospital
- Two seclusion rooms
- Mental health clinics at provincial hospitals
- No current mental health act
  - Drafting MHA comparable to Samoa and NZ
Vanuatu

- 80+ general nurses with short training courses in mental health.
- Depot clinics
- Forensic
- Adult + CAMHS
Vanuatu - mental health staffing

- One Psychiatric registrar
  - One junior doctor
- 2 Nurse specialists
- 24/7 on call
- Available funded medication options are confined to Haloperidol, Chlorpromazine, Amitriptyline, Fluphenazine
Initiating the Vanuatu Psychiatry Mentoring Programme
Background: 2013 Pasifika Study Group
Vanuatu psychiatry mentoring programme

Components

- Onsite visits: Each mentor to visit Vanuatu once a year
- Online supervision: at regular intervals- eg via zoom or whatsapp.
- Adhoc advice to Dr Obed outside of the above eg via whatsapp texting or phone calls
Vanuatu Psychiatry Mentorship Program was reviewed this morning with mentors Consultant Psychiatrists Dr. Allister Bush & Prof. Stephen Stathis. Ongoing mentoring of aspiring psychiatrist is needed and the RANZCP Faculty of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry is in full support of this program. Tankio tumas! #TeamMentalHealth 🇵🇫👍
Vanuatu Psychiatry Mentoring Program
Online supervision
Adhoc WhatsApp consultation
WhatsApp messages:

Allister, Stephen, You

the symptoms have resolved. I am pushing on with current treatment and will update after next visit.

3:31 PM

Prof. Stephen Stathis

Good news Jim. Did you add in chlorpromazine or did you decide to wait?

3:41 PM

I did not give the Chlorpromazine. She will ve going to her island/village in a few days and I am encouraging her to do that. She will be going to see her mother. That should also be therapeutic for her to get connected with her roots.

3:55 PM

Thank you for the guidance in this case

4:03 PM

Allister Bush

Well done, feel free to keep us posted

4:09 PM

How much Diazepam is she on now?

4:10 PM
In country visits
Benefits of the mentoring programme
Vanuatu Mentoring Program

- Supervisory visits
  - 5 visits between 2016-2017
  - Teaching sessions
- Observation of clinics
- Case discussions
- Formulation of cases
- Grand round talks
- Online supervision arranged monthly- tech issues
  - Whatsapp
Vanuatu psychiatry mentoring programme

Principles:

1. Directed by the needs and requests from Dr Jimmy Obed
2. Intended to provide both on site as well as distance support
3. Expected to continue over an extended period such as several years
4. Mentors expected to cover their own costs
5. Programme intended to support Dr Obed with a view to him undertaking specialist training in psychiatry outside Vanuatu at a future time
Conclusions

- This partnership with Dr Jimmy Obed demonstrates a simple strategy to support the development of indigenous mental health practices and services in a Pacific context.

- Principles of continuity, mutual respect, flexibility and mutual learning are key factors in building such working relationships.

- Socio-historical contextual processes such as colonisation need to be understood so that reconciliation, and restoration of equitable power relations can be undertaken to enhance such partnerships.