One of the problems of the 20th century is the increasing incidence of mental illness. In the modern concept, mental health is not mere absence of mental illness. Some psychologists have defined mental health as the ability of the individual to make personal and social adjustments. These adjustments relate to one's daily life in relation to others, at home and at work. Health in its modern concept, as defined by WHO implies complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease. Mental health contributes to physical health, and *vice-versa.*

Problem in India

According to figures provided by mental health workers, mental illness affects at least 1-2 per cent of the population. In India, it is estimated there are at least 12 million mentally ill persons. In some countries, the total cost of treating mental illness is equal to half of the national expenditure for all health care.

Changing concepts

For long, the mentally ill were thought to be possessed by devils. Initially they were "cast out"; then they were kept in institutions or "madhouses" outside the community. At a later period they were placed in "mental asylums" which gave them a place of shelter.

During the 20th century, concepts in the treatment of mentally ill began to change. The discovery of insulin therapy, electric shock therapy and psychoactive drugs have brought about a rapid change in the treatment of the mentally ill. The idea that the mental patients can be admitted and treated in a general hospital developed.

The current trend is not to treat mental health services apart, but an integral part of community health services. Public health nurses are also being increasingly involved in mental health programmes; they have an important role to play in case-finding and family counselling. Community health services are also becoming involved in after-care and other aspects of mental health.

Characteristics of a mentally healthy person

A mentally healthy person has three main characteristics :

(1) He feels comfortable about himself, that is, he feels reasonably secure and adequate. He neither under-estimates nor over-estimates his own ability. He accepts his short-comings. He has self-respect.

(2) The mentally healthy person can get along with other people. He has friendships that are satisfying and lasting. He is not isolated, but is able to feel a part of a group. He lives in a world of reality.

(3) The mentally healthy person is able to meet the demands of life. He is able to think for himself and to take his own decisions. He sets reasonable goals for himself. He shoulders his daily responsibilities.

Foundations of mental health

The foundations of mental health have already been indicated in Chapter 3. Briefly, they are : *(1) Heredity :* Human beings are born with a genetic inheritance, called the *genotype,* which determines the potentialities of each individual's physical and mental development. It is well known that certain mental diseases (e.g.

schizophrenia) runs in families. (2) *Physical health* : Poor physical health may predispose an individual to mental illness. Neurological disease, endocrine diseases, various types of acute and chronic infections, head injuries, all may affect mental health. A healthy mind and a healthy body often go hand in hand. (3) *Social factors* : Life hazards which generate crisis may precipitate mental ill-health. This is known as the "crisis theory" of mental illness. Worries, anxieties, emotional stress, tension, frustration, unhappy marriages, broken homes, poverty, cruelty, neglect, all lead to mental illness.

Mental health needs

The needs of man which contribute to mental health are the same from birth till death. These are : (1) the need for affection (2) the need for belonging (3) the need for independence (4) the need for achievement (5) the need for recognition or approval (6) the need for a sense of personal worth, and (7) the need for self-actualization. These needs only differ in degree and qualitative importance at various ages.

Psychiatric nursing

Caring of the sick is the primary responsibility of a trained nurse. Sickness does not mean physical illness alone. It includes mental or psychiatric disorders also.

Psychiatric treatment is a team work. Nurses are important members of the psychiatric team. The duties, responsibilities and functions of the psychiatric nurse goes beyond the administration of drugs prescribed by the psychiatrist. The nurses spend more time with the mentally ill, observing and recognizing their abnormal behaviour patterns. These observations are communicated to the psychiatrist which helps him in diagnosis and treatment, thus the psychiatric nurse takes care of both the physical and psychiatric aspect of the patient. In order to look after the mentally ill patients, the psychiatric nurse requires special training, e.g., about the development of personality, the dynamics of behaviour, the psychiatric symptoms, the causative factors of psychiatric illness and the treatment and intervention (crisis intervention, for example an aggressive act of a patient).

Trained psychiatric nurses are required in mental hospitals, day hospitals; and in general hospitals with psychiatric clinics.

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME

The Government of India launched a National Mental Health Programme during the VII plan period with following objectives.

- to ensure availability and accessibility of minimum mental health care services.

- to encourage application of mental health knowledge in general health care and in social development.

- to promote community participation in the mental health, and

- to stimulate efforts towards self-help in the community.

Warning signs of poor mental health

William C. Menninger, President of the Menninger Foundation, Topeka, Kansas, United States of America drew up the following questions to help in taking one's own mental health pulse :

1. Are you *always* worrying ?

2. Are you *unable* to concentrate because of unrecognized reasons ?

3. Are you *continually* unhappy without justified cause ?

4. Do you lose your *temper easily* and *often* ?

5. Are you troubled by *regular* insomnia ?

6. Do you have wide fluctuations in your moods, from depression to elation, back to depression, which *incapacitate* you ?

7. Do you *continually* dislike to be with people ?

8. Are you *upset* if the routine of your life is disturbed ?

9. Do your children *consistently* "get on your nerves" ?

10. Are you "browned off" and *constantly* bitter ?

11. Are you afraid *without* real cause ?

12. Are you *always* right and the other person always wrong ?

13. Do you have numerous aches and pains for which no doctor can find a physical cause ?

The conditions charted in these questions are the major warning signals of poor mental health in one degree or another. According to Dr. Menninger, help is necessary if the answer to any of these questions is definitely "yes".

Types of mental illness

Mental diseases, broadly speaking, may be divided into two groups :

(1) Major disorders

    (a) Schizophrenia

    (b) Manic depressive psychosis

    (c) Paranoia

(2) Minor disorders

    (a) Neurosis or psychoneurosis

    (b) Personality disorders

(1) SCHIZOPHRENIA : This disorder is also known as "split personality". The patient lives in a dream world of his own. (2) MANIC DEPRESSIVE PSYCHOSIS : The symptoms vary from extreme depression to excitement. (3) PARANOIA : This disorder is associated with extreme suspicion; the patient lives in a world of delusion. (4) PSYCHONEUROSIS: The patient is not "insane", but he shows peculiar symptoms such as unwanted fears, compulsions and obsessions.

Mental health services

Mental health services in a community are concerned not only with early diagnosis and treatment, but also with the preservation and promotion of good mental health, and prevention of mental illness. The mental health services comprise :

(1) Early diagnosis and treatment

(2) Rehabilitation

(3) Group and individual psychotherapy

(4) Mental health education

(5) Use of modern psychoactive drugs

(6) After-care services.

COMPREHENSIVE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME

Since 95 per cent of psychiatric cases can be treated with or without hospitalization close to their homes, the current trend is full integration of psychiatric services with other health services. The Community Mental Health Programme includes all community facilities pertinent in any way to prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. The philosophy of community Mental Health Programme consists of the following essential elements : (1) In-patient services (2) Out-patient services (3) Partial hospitalization (4) Emergency services (5) Diagnostic services (6) Pre-care and after-care services including foster home placement and home visiting (7) Education services (8) Training and (9) Research and evaluation.