

## Seeing Mental Health as Part of Well-being

This issue of *CommonHealth*—the first in a two-part series on behavioral healthcare—explores the complex relationship between the physical, mental, and behavioral aspects of a person's overall well-being. The concept of behavioral healthcare stems from the idea that these three aspects are inextricably linked. For centuries, doctors focused on treating people who were physically sick, while mental health providers focused on treating those most severely afflicted with mental or emotional problems. Just as the medical profession is beginning to see disease prevention and health promotion as part of treating a patient, the mental health field is increasingly making others aware of the need for proactive approaches to treating the mental health of individuals before their condition reaches crisis proportions. As AIHA partners develop new programs and expand existing services—specifically within primary care facilities—there will be many opportunities to integrate behavioral health into these services, thereby enhancing the overall health of the communities they serve.

This first issue of the two-part series focuses primarily on mental health, while the second will look at substance abuse and at-risk populations. Inside these pages are the stories of many AIHA partners who are addressing mental health issues within their communities, as well as articles that delve into topics such as the disease burden mental and behavioral disorders place on society, the status of mental healthcare reform in the NIS, the management of a behavioral healthcare facility, and one partnership's approach to integrating mental health services into the primary care model.

The issue begins with an overview of behavioral healthcare, including an elaboration of its underlying concepts, an explanation of why this subject is a growing concern that needs to be addressed at all levels of the healthcare infrastructure, and a discussion of behavioral health as a global issue by Marten deVries. In "Mental Healthcare in the NIS," Zoya Shabarova



Illustration courtesy of Suncobret and Leah Curtin.

provides a summary of the topic from the perspective of countries in that region.

Other articles look at individual aspects of mental health and possible methods of implementing and managing appropriate services and programs. Valery Krasnov writes on depression; Ante Gilic and Michael Swerdlow detail post-traumatic stress disorder; Joe Maier discusses methods of diagnosing dementia; and LeeAnn Ranieri and Diane Thompson explain why intimate partner violence should be viewed as a mental health issue. Adding dimension to the discussion on depression are three interviews that provide insight on the disease from the perspective of a patient, a family member, and a healthcare professional (the first two interviews are found within the article; the third is part of "AIHA Voices"). Two subsequent articles look at some of the strategies partners are using to address issues such as intimate partner violence within their communities, and, in "AIHA Voices", Leah Curtin shares some of her personal experiences with children in war-torn Croatia.

The articles in this issue emphasize the need to increase the awareness of mental health issues among medical professionals, the people they serve, and the local and national administrators who set policies. Equally important is the need to integrate appropriate programs and services into the framework of existing clinical facilities. By educating communities and providers alike, AIHA partners can help break the stigma that has cast a shadow over those suffering from mental illness and behavioral disorders for far too long.

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