



Umgeni News

STAY INFORMED

Special Edition 1/2019

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS EVENT



Welcoming the guests and Community Members



Event Ushers



Mental Health Care User's entertaining the crowd



Miss N.E. Ndlovu (Chief Executive Officer—CEO) : Welcoming the guests and the Community

On the 21 August 2019, Umgeni Hospital commemorated Mental Health Day at Howick West Community Hall which is approximately 1km from the hospital. The theme was **“Prevention of suicide in adults and adolescents”**. Miss Ndlovu (CEO) gave a brief outline of the purpose of the event; stating that it was to create awareness about mental health issues, suicide, rights of intellectually challenged individuals, as well as the services available at Umgeni Specialised Psychiatric Hospital.

Miss Ndlovu also proceeded to introduce special guests that were present:

- Department of Health Officials: Mrs Sosibo (Director: Nursing Services), Mr Ruthanum (Deputy Director: Mental Health), Senior Management: (Townhill, Fort Napier, Don Mckenzie Hospitals, Howick Clinic, Si-phuthando Step-Down Facility);
- Officials from private organisations: Alcoholics Anonymous, Mental Health Society;
- Mental Health Review Board: Mr Shangase (Chairperson), Mr Ntuli (Member);
- uMngeni Municipal Councillors: Cllr Dlamini (Speaker), Cllr Mkhasibe, Cllr Mthlane;
- Hospital Board: Mr Khoza (Chairperson) - accompanied by wife Mrs Khoza, Cllr Dlamini (Treasurer) and Mr Mthethwa (Member); and
- Umgeni Hospital Senior Management

Further to doing introductions, Miss Ndlovu also outlined the hospital profile:

She stated that Umgeni Hospital is a specialized psychiatric facility which provides care to intellectually challenged individuals as per Mental Health Care Act 17 of 2002. This legislation provides for the admission of severe to profound intellectually challenged individuals throughout KwaZulu-Natal (KZN).

The CEO also welcomed all members of the community and thanked them for taking the time to be part of the event. She encouraged them to listen to all the talks as all the information that would be given, would be useful and helpful. She ended her talk by singing the song “Impilo iyasetshenzelwa” - the crowd joined jovially in the song.



Howick Community Members attending health screenings

Clinicians from both Umgeni Hospital and Lion's River Mobile Clinic conducted health screenings. The services included: Pap smear, HIV/AIDS counselling and testing, TB screening, Haemoglobin and Blood Pressure testing. JHEPAGO (a private organization) assisted by conducting Medical Male Circumcision (MMC).

The statistics for the services provided are as follows:

- Pap Smear = 40
- HIV Counselling and Testing =
- TB Screening =
- Haemoglobin Testing =
- Blood Pressure testing =
- Medical Male Circumcision = 4

The turnout with regards to the number of people that were eager to get assistance at health service points, was a clear indication that the local community was in dire need for such services. These are people mostly from informal settlements, i.e. Mathand' uBisi, Lang-gewag, Howick West, Shiyabazali and Mpophomeni. Some individuals were even in need of wheel-chairs and other assistive devices.

It is our hope, in light of what we observed on the day, that more of such services could be brought to the community.



Miss. N.N. Hadebe: addressing the community



Mr M. Govender (AA) and Client addressing the community

Miss Hadebe (Social Worker) presented to the community the hospital admission criteria and services offered by Umgeni Hospital.

Other organisations that were invited, namely: Alcoholics & Anonymous (AA), Mental Health Society, Advocacy Group, shared with the community the importance of mental health and prevention of mental illness.

Mr Govender (AA: Public Relations Officer for Midlands Region) gave a lengthy talk about the organization's strategy in managing clients that struggle with substance and drug abuse. He highlighted the following points:

- Clients need to admit that their lives have become unmanageable;
- The client should accept that they need Spiritual intervention;
- They should also have done soul searching & fearless moral inventory of themselves;
- He/she should admit to God, to themselves and to others the exact nature of their wrong, and have God remove all defects of character; humbly requesting Him to remove their shortcomings;
- The client should make a list of people they had harmed and be willing to make amends with them all "directly" except when to do so will injure them or others; and
- The client should continue to do introspection and admit where they've done wrong; resort to prayer and meditation to improve their conscious contact with God.

The client, having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, is expected to carry this message to all alcoholics and to practice these principles in their personal affairs.



Miss Zoleka Dlamini from Pome Mental Illness Advocacy gave an informative presentation on suicide prevention. The presentation covered aspects such as suicide prevention tactics, identifying warning signs, adopting a “see, hear, speak” syndrome, accepting / being open / seeking help, staying connected and engaging with others, promoting self, peer, family and community engagement; as well as having programmes and organisations based in communities and having conversations that address mental illness and realising the necessity to voice and speak about mental illness.

Miss Dlamini stressed that prevention is better than cure—that it was critical for people to be aware of issues such as depression, stress, loneliness and feelings of worthlessness. She advised that it was also important to be able to identify warning signs such as:

- (I) Emotional Changes (feeling helpless, lonely, depressed, guilty, hopeless, not being interested in previous activities one used to do); and
- (II) Physical Changes (change in sleeping and appetite pattern wanting to self harm or previously self harmed). And adopting new changes such as substance abuse (drugs & alcohol).

Speaking and healing from emotional wounds is also critical. Miss Dlamini explained that this can only be facilitated by avoiding a judgemental attitude and being quick to share opinions when you do not understand the individual’s feelings. The audience was advised to **just listen**.

Finally, change in behaviour, can easily be identified when there is peer, family and community engagement. Positive change can only happen when we all adopt and promote engaging and speaking about our problems rather than escaping to prescriptions.



Mr Keith Ruhanum (Guest Speaker)

Mr Keith Ruhanam, the Deputy Director: Mental Health & Substance Abuse, encouraged people to become ambassadors of mental health. He advised that people who are able to handle stresses and frustrations well, make good choices in life. He emphasized that “there is no health without mental health”.

“People should not judge or discriminate against intellectually challenged individuals, because the cause of their disability may not be known.”

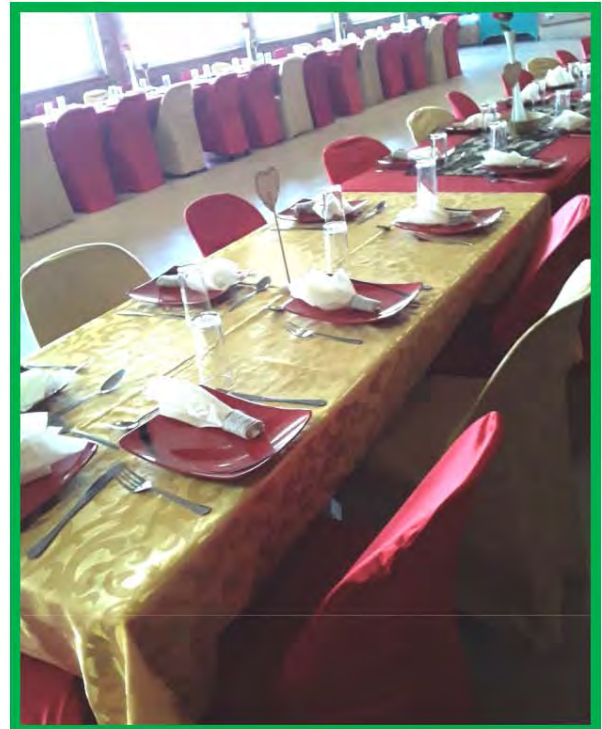
He listed and explained some conditions affecting the communities where mental health is concerned:

- ⇒ Schizophrenia: The symptoms are due more to a chemical breakdown where the information and stimulus are wrongly interpreted in the brain. The affected individual can feel very sad, paranoid. These feelings are often accompanied by behaviours such as: aggression, being withdrawn, talking to oneself, etc. These individuals can also develop poor hygiene at times.
- ⇒ Depression: Individuals feel helpless, worthless, sometimes entertains ideas of committing suicide. Physically healthy individuals can also experience the same feelings.
- ⇒ Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): This disorder goes hand in hand with anxiety. It is as a result of a past painful experience.
- ⇒ Bipolar: This illness manifests itself through extreme mood swings, where an individual expresses feelings of either extreme happiness (excited for no apparent reason) or extreme sadness or depression (feeling very low). Often, affected individuals tend to spend money wastefully and impulsively poor reasoning, decision-making and impaired judgement. Symptoms vary from person to person.

PHOTO GALLERY



EVENT PICTURES



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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