

Ministry to push for threefold increase in mental health budget

Centre for Public Health inaugurated on NIMHANS campus

Staff Reporter

BANGALORE: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare plans to push for a threefold increase in the mental health budget in the 12th Five-Year Plan.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Centre for Public Health, and a symposium titled 'Public health priorities in mental, neurological and substance use disorders and injuries', Sujaya Krishnan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, said the department had allocated Rs. 623 crore for mental health in the 11th Five-Year Plan and she hoped for at least a threefold increase in the mental health budget in the next one.

Explaining the need for an increased budget, Ms. Krishnan stated that the number of mental health professionals in the country was inadequate. There was a "severe" shortage of mental health professionals including psychiatrists, psychologists and nurses, she said. "There is a huge gap between the number of people required and the number of people available. Data indicates that there is a 66 per cent shortage of human resources in the mental health [sector]," she said.

In this scenario, she said,



(From left) Shekhar Saxena of WHO, P. Satish Chandra Director/ Vice-Chancellor, NIMHANS, and Sujaya Krishnan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare at the inauguration of Centre for Public Health in Bangalore on Tuesday.

— PHOTO: HARSHA PADYANA

there was a need for the Medical Education Department and Health Department to work together. "Medical col-

leges come under the purview of the Medical Education Department that need to look into the existing curriculum and lay emphasis on mental health so that we will have more trained professionals who can treat people with mental disorders."

Talking about the District Mental Health Programme, which decentralises mental healthcare in the community using various health professionals, she said the Health Ministry would aim to expand it from the current 123 districts across the country to all districts, in a phased manner.

Shekhar Saxena, Director, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, World Health Organization, also emphasised the need to increase the mental health budget. While mental disorders made up 13 per cent of the global diseases, the spending on it was less than 3 per cent, he said.

However, an increase in budget alone was not enough, he said. "One of the things that the State governments need to do is to make mental healthcare services available in primary health centres," he mentioned. Speaking on the Mental Health Care Bill 2012, which is expected to be tabled in the Parliament soon, Ms. Krishnan said it was a "progressive" Bill.

Master's programme at CPH

Staff Reporter

BANGALORE: The Centre for Public Health (CPH) that was inaugurated on the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) campus here on Tuesday, would offer a

two-year Master's programme in Public Health from 2013-14.

The Master's programme would focus on public issues with special focus on mental health. Also, short-term courses would be conducted on related topics.