Psychiatric Nurses Receive mhGAP Intervention Guide

The Sierra Leone Psychiatric Hospital with support from WHO, EU and the College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (COMAHS) on 12 April presented the WHO Mental Health Gap Action Programme Intervention Guide (mhGAP-IG) to 21 mental health nurses-in-training at the psychiatric hospital in Freetown. The intervention guide was provided to the trainees for use during the course of their training and to guide them in identifying priority mental health conditions after completion.

The Guide is expected to provide insight to the trainees on the priority mental health conditions that they would be dealing with.

This is the first time the country is training nurses in mental health which is seen as an opportunity to improve the country’s mental health situation. Upon completion of the 18 months course the nurses will be assigned to the psychiatric hospital and different health care centres to identify and manage priority mental health conditions. The training is being sponsored by the EU through the Enabling Access to Mental Health in Sierra Leone.

The first national mental health survey in 2002 showed that 1 in 6 Sierra Leoneans would have some form of mild depression. However there is a huge treatment gap for patients with mental disorders in the country. It is expected the nurses being trained would change the statistics in psychiatric health service providers in the country.

The mhGAP-IG presents integrated management of priority conditions including: depression, psychosis, bipolar disorders, epilepsy, developmental and behavioural disorders in children and adolescents, dementia, alcohol use disorders, drug use disorders, self-harm/suicide and other significant emotional or medically unexplained complaints.