

Offering a Ray of Hope for the Mentally-ill and Differently-abled Individuals

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ABSTRACT

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Mentally-ill/challenged and differently-abled persons constitute a significant proportion of global population the health care and social welfare needs of which can neither be ignored nor be neglected. In the global effort to ensure accessibility, availability and affordability of the primary health care services to all segments of people including the mentally-ill and disabled individuals, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College & Research Institute (SSSMC & RI), Kancheepuram district, Tamil Nadu has extended the wide scope of preventive, curative and psychologically rehabilitative services to the inmates of a Special school and home for the mentally ill / challenged and multiple-disabled individuals named Anbagam. To conclude, in rural areas and in low-resource settings which usually lack the geographical accessibility and availability of medical personnel and paramedics, the extension of health care services by SSSMC & RI for the welfare of mentally ill, disabled and community in general is definitely a stepping stone towards improving the quality of life of the community and health indicators of the region in general.

Key Words: Mentally-ill, Differently abled, Public health, India

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World Health Organization (WHO) has defined health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.¹ Mental health is the foundation for individual well-being and for the effective functioning of a community. According to the recent statistics released by World Health Organization it has been revealed that more than 450 million people suffer from mental disorders worldwide.¹ Similarly, more than a billion people (15% of world's population) live with some form of disability which tends to cast a significant impact on the individual development and a constant struggle for the family members.^{2,3} Mentally-ill/challenged and differently-abled persons constitute a significant proportion of global population the health care and social welfare needs of which can neither be ignored nor be neglected.^{4,5}

In the global effort to ensure accessibility, availability and affordability of the primary health care services to all segments of people including the mentally-ill and disabled individuals in low-resource settings, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College & Research Institute (SSSMC & RI), Kancheepuram district, Tamil Nadu has extended the wide scope of preventive, curative and psychologically rehabilitative services to the inmates of a special school and home for the mentally ill / challenged and multiple-disabled individuals named Anbagam. The best part of this initiative is that SSSMC & RI has not restricted its services to the 45 inmates of the special home but has also extended the health care services to the residents from neighboring areas of Panangathupakkam, Kayar, Kolathur, Pungeri, Echankadu, and Mambakkam.

The aim is to explore the morbidity pattern of the inmates and of the community members in the nearby areas and thus offer them need-based care with the help of specialist doctors. In this mission to improve the health status and quality of life in low-resource settings, Department of Community Medicine has been identified as the lead department in planning and conducting the outreach activity, well-supported with the

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clinicians from different clinical departments in rotation. The medical camp is being conducted every week and apart from offering medical treatment by the specialist doctors, basic laboratory investigations and free medicines have also been made available to the beneficiaries with the assistance of trained and qualified team of nurses, laboratory technicians and pharmacists. Furthermore, the Institute is also committed to arranging free transport and inpatient treatment for patients who are in need of admission for diagnostic / therapeutic management of their illnesses.

To conclude, in rural areas and in low-resource settings which usually lack the geographical accessibility and availability of medical personnel and paramedics, the extension of health care services by Shri Sathya Sai Medical College & Research Institute for the welfare of mentally ill, disabled and community in general is definitely a stepping stone towards improving the quality of life of the community and health indicators of the region in general.

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