

PhD Colloquium on Mental Health.

Breakfast meeting on July 5, 2012, Silver Springs Hotel, Nairobi

Protocol

- There are approximately 3 million Kenyans living with intellectual and mental disabilities/illness, most of them poor. While there is basic health cover (NHIF), this only covers bed charges for contributors.
- The government spends approximately 0.01% of the Health budget on mental health care, yet one quarter of patients seeking help in public hospitals complain of some sort of mental issues.
- This means that mental health care in Kenya is still very inaccessible, and mainly to the poor.
- Inadequate access to mental health care is not the only problem that bedevils the mental health care arena. Stigma and negative myths associated with mental illness impedes openness about mental illness.

- Families with family members who are mentally ill are petrified to bring their kin out to seek medical attention or even enjoy the warm afternoon sun because of stigma; the odd stare or the whispers that follow them
- While we as individuals need to reach deep into our hearts to find love that is within and share it, the need for capacity building to increase the number of mental health care professionals in Kenya and to have mental health care integrated into primary health care system is critical.
- The University of Nairobi can contribute towards addressing some of these challenges through capacity building and conducting research that informs policy and practice.