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Introduction:

Undiagnosed or undetected Leprosy has long-term consequences that results in impairment and stigma. This includes a major impact on mental wellbeing of a person affected by this disease. Depression and Anxiety are the most common issues found in people affected by leprosy. Attention to mental health issues remains a low priority in general and more so for those with Hansen's disease. Counselling facilitates in exchanging thoughts and ideas by understanding people's underlying feelings and sentiment that results in practical solutions that helps them tide over their prevailing situation.

Objectives:

1. To develop an online & offline counselling manual for people affected with leprosy at different service points.
2. To pilot the counselling manual to validate and standardize it.
3. To develop an online and offline training curriculum for healthcare workers.
4. Train and building capacity of health care staffs for effective counselling.

Key Guiding Principles:

- ✓ Consultative and Participatory - the aim is to ensure that the process reflects experiences, views, concerns, and expectations of all stakeholders and beneficiaries.
- ✓ Inclusiveness - to ensure the process and the products can respond to the unique needs, capabilities, and circumstances of the health care providers at different levels of the system and people affected by leprosy of different gender, ethnicity, stages of disease, level of disability etc.
- ✓ Learning approach - to ensure that the experiences of all stakeholders and health care providers with achieving mental well-being for people affected by leprosy can be identified and lessons learnt utilized to contribute to any further efforts to strengthen mental health services and support.
- ✓ Consent and Confidentiality – to ensure openness and confidentiality for all stakeholders.

Limitations:

- ✓ Its commonly observed that the health care staffs are unable to identify signs and symptoms of common mental issues of a person affected by leprosy.
- ✓ The mental health issues are ignored, and the importance of counselling is misunderstood as merely giving advice.
- ✓ Absence of standard counselling manual for people affected by leprosy.

Conclusion:

People affected by leprosy need mental health-care interventions, with attention to identifying individuals at increased risk for mental health problems or with additional needs.