Mental Health and Mental Disorder Recommendation Programs for the GMS

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) is rich with natural resources, cultural diversity, world heritage and economic challenges, which make this subregion one of the most interesting and attractive places for investment in the world. The development of the GMS in each country and its peoples depends on various aspects, such as economic, sociocultural and environmental issues, and certainly those aspects impact the people’s health. The GMS countries now are a center for the Association of Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN), bound together by the Mekong River. These include Thailand, Myanmar, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Cambodia, Vietnam, and Yunnan Province and the Guangxi autonomous region in the People’s Republic of China. The integration of the GMS countries is helping to transform those regions into a single market with a free flow of products, services, and skilled labor as well as open investment openness, which will ultimately support regional economic growth.

This special issue of Current Psychiatric Reviews analyzes the different problems currently affecting the GMS people and their impact on the health service system and health status of the people, especially regarding the mental disorders of the people living in this area. The first article aims to compare the determinants of the health service system and health status of the people in Thailand, Lao PDR, Vietnam, and Cambodia based on the country indicators and previous study results of a GMS project on the health service system and health status of the people in the GMS [1]. After the key determinants were compared in each country, a review by M. Ruchiwit and others indicates that the main determinants affecting the health service system and health status of the people in the GMS were trade and investment, social and cultural values, medical information and technology, along with the lifestyle and work environment [2]. Overall, the strengths and weaknesses of hospitals significantly affect the health service system in each country. In Thailand, the health service system and health status of the people are significantly influenced by medical information and technology because of the government initiatives in improving the healthcare quality through the use of modern technology. However, in Vietnam, the social and cultural values significantly affect the health service system and health status of the people because of the influence of religion there. In Cambodia, the strengths and weaknesses of hospitals are the key determinants that influence the health service system and health status of the people. The Lao PDR recognizes the importance of not only the strengths and weaknesses of the hospitals that influence the health service system of its country, but also the importance of trade and investment, together with medical information and technology, which have influenced the health status of the Lao peoples. This is because the Lao PDR is now trying to encourage its country to be a source of capital and medical technology. Therefore, understanding those determinants is essential for developing policies and programs that will impact the population’s health and the country’s development in terms of the health service system [3].

The second article is a review of the relationships among the key determinants affecting the mental health disorders of the GMS people. This article illustrates the major problems, actual interventions, and relationships of the economy, environmental development, and healthcare in the GMS. Moreover, it identifies the determinants of mental health disorders. As GMS integration is likely to bring about major changes to this area in the new era, it can subsequently cause many problems as well, including mental health issues of people living in this region. The characteristic differences among the GMS member countries in terms of trade and investment, social and cultural values, medical information and technology, and the living and work environment have become major problems in terms of mental disorders such as depression, stress and substance abuse [4, 5]. This article discusses epidemiological studies together with studies on the burden of diseases and the risk factors concerning mental disorders, especially in terms of depression, anxiety, substance use and psychoses. All of the mental health problems in the GMS countries should be solved through policy development, follow-up planning programs, and collaborations among all public and private sectors.

As mentioned above, the people of the GMS have a high risk of mental disorders, and this is so because the people in this region are sometimes trafficked for forced sex work and various forms of forced labor. In these situations, victims often endure violence and abuse from trafficking recruiters, employers and other individuals [6]. Thus, the third article discusses mental health disorder, with therapeutic modalities modified for the GMS, identifies the elements characterizing mental disorders, and describes some of the possible treatment modalities. A comparative analysis and review of epidemiological studies and mental disorder therapies, including overviews of previous research, was used to generate a synthesis of the existing knowledge of mental disorder therapeutic modalities. Regarding the treatments of mental disorders that have empirical support, it was indicated that those treatments, including pharmacological treatments and psychological treatments such as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, biofeedback technique, and music therapy, were effective.

A review by the Global Forum for Health Research and the World Health Organization stated that mental disorders are responsible for 13% of the global burden of disease. Despite this evidence, mental health issues are neglected and represent an under-researched area in the health service system. In addition, most low- and middle-income countries devote less than 1% of their expenditure to mental health issues [7]. Therefore, the last article focuses on mental health and mental disorder recommendation programs. This special issue primarily addresses policy makers and funders of research regarding mental disorders at the GMS level in order to encourage them to take immediate action for future recommended programs. Useful guidance re-
garding the prevention and treatment of mental disorders should be provided to the GMS peoples in order to develop effective treatment modalities that will help promote a better quality of life for them in the future.

It is strongly recommended that the following should be involved in mental health programs: a) elevating the people’s incomes concerning trade and investment in order to assist with the decrease of their poverty; b) developing sustainable green growth for a better living and work environment; c) managing the quality of the health service system in terms of developing a medical information and technology system; and d) being aware of exchanging the social and cultural values in each country because of the multicultural values when becoming a part of ASEAN.

Keywords: Health determinants, health service system, health status, greater mekong sub-region, medical information and technology, living and work environment, social and cultural values, trade and investment, mental disorder therapeutic modalities, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, biofeedback technique, music therapy, mental health and mental disorder recommendation programs

REFERENCES


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