



Aims and Concept of Primary Care Mental Health in Older Adults: A Global Perspective

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Gabriel Ivbijaro and Carlos Augusto
de Mendonça Lima

Primary care mental health in older adults: a global perspective is a resource to support improved care for a growing population of older adults with mental health difficulties that recognises innovative solutions to support the dignity of older adults whilst embracing new technology.

As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Alma-Ata Declaration, we need to recognise that not everyone has fully benefitted from the opportunities provided by the move to primary care [1] especially many older adults with mental health difficulties.

We can do better, and the world can do better, but, for this to happen, primary care needs to be more receptive to the special needs of older adults with mental health difficulties and better skilled to address these common problems.

In 1978, the world had a total of 4,287,000,000 habitants; 248,998,000 of them were over 65 years of age representing 5.81% of the total population. Forty years later, the world has a total population of 7,530,000,000 habitants; 654,568,000 of them are over 65 years of age representing 8.70% of the

total population. Older adults are now the group with the greatest growth rate [2].

In the context of the rapid growth in numbers of the older adult population, the mental health of older adults has become a huge challenge for all concerned, especially with the high prevalence of mental health issues in this group.

The ageing world population needs to be central in all policies and programmes in order to enable health systems to be more equitable, inclusive and fair. Services need to be designed to respond to the mental health needs of older adults; educational programmes need to be offered for professionals to improve their specific skills to treat and care for this important group.

Carers of older adults with mental health difficulties are an important resource and need to be supported to prevent their own burn out. The population needs to be educated about the ageing process and encouraged to be advocates for older adults with mental health difficulties to combat misconceptions, prejudices, stigma and discrimination [3], and we have provided some resources that can be used to inspect places where older adults with mental health difficulties can be cared for.

Keeping up with technological advances and innovations is very important in delivering quality care to older adults with mental health difficulties to support their continuing independence and dignity, and we have provided some examples of this.

G. Ivbijaro (✉)

NOVA University, Lisbon, Portugal

Waltham Forest Community and Family
Health Services, London, UK

C. A. de Mendonça Lima
Unity of Old Age Psychiatry, Centre Les Toises,
Lausanne, Switzerland

Integrated and collaborative care between primary care, specialists, social services, the voluntary and charitable sector, patients, carers, families and government bodies should always be considered and embraced when developing care packages for older adults with mental health difficulties [4–7].

The WPA-Lancet Psychiatry Commission on the Future of Psychiatry [8] has identified several priority areas for mental health over the next decade including health-care system reform embracing stepped care, increased use of multidisciplinary teamwork, more of a public health approach and the integration of mental and physical health care. The collaboration between primary care teams and other sectors of the health-care system, as well as improving knowledge and skills, will help to improve the mental health care of older adults.

1.1 Structure

The book is structured to enable individuals to understand the complex network of factors that contribute to the mental health of older adults, and each chapter opens with key messages.

- Parts I and II provide an introduction to the foundations of integrated systems to promote good mental health in older adults, including the wide determinants of health, the general concept of frailty and the importance of sometimes complex multimorbidity in this particular population.
- Part III describes the tools for assessment, including neurocognitive assessment.
- Part IV describes therapeutic strategies including the importance of promoting mental and physical health and strategies to advocate for better support for those in need.
- Parts V and VI describes common mental health problems in older adults and how to manage them using a multidisciplinary approach.
- Part VII is focused on psychosocial and neurocognitive rehabilitation.
- Part VIII presents a range of case examples from professionals working with older adults with mental health difficulties.

References

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