

# CHALLENGES IN OPERATIONALIZING A COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM IN WESTERN RURAL INDIA

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## **Background:**

Community based programs deploying Community Health workers have been used globally as low-cost alternatives to serve communities. These programs are based on a task-shifting model, especially in resource poor settings and require extensive training and supervision.

## **Methods:**

A community based mental health program was implemented by the Foundation of Research in Community Health in rural parts of Western India and a thorough process documentation was used to collect data by means of informal discussions and interaction with the program staff.

## **Results:**

### *Programme level challenges:*

- Recruitment of personnel
- Sensitization to mental health for program personnel
- Absorption of mental health concepts
- Community grounded in traditional beliefs
- Appropriate CHW to population ratio
- Establishing referral linkages
- Addressing rehabilitation concerns of the patients
- Supervising the heavy documentation

### *Community level challenges:*

- Power equations in the community
- Participation from the community
- Misconceptions and suspicions regarding mental health

### *Systemic challenges:*

- Transfer the expertise and knowledge to the public health systems
- Maintaining regular drug procurement
- Inclusion of mental health at primary care level



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