

Training of mental health professionals in Rwanda on how to treat persons with epilepsy and depression in primary health care.

Introduction.

The training took place on August 4, 2023 in Kigali, and was attended by 54 mental health professionals from district and referral hospitals, the University of Rwanda-Department of Mental Health Nursing, as well as some non-governmental organizations. It was facilitated by Ass. Prof. Sebera Fidèle, Neurologist at Ndera Neuropsychiatric Teaching Hospital Rwanda, Mrs. M. Providence Umuziga, RMHN, MSN, PhD(c), Lecturer, University of Rwanda, as well as Edmond Dufatanye from Rwanda Biomedical Center, and President of Rwandan Society for Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses (RSPN).

Considering the high prevalence of depression among People with Epilepsy(PwE) in Rwanda (14.2%-Sebera et al.2023), it has been very important to train mental health professionals involved in the care of PwE on how to treat persons with epilepsy and depression in primary health care.

The aim of the training was to build the capacity of mental health professionals on the screening and treatment of depression affecting PwE, taking into account the therapeutic options available in the context of Rwanda.

Conduct of the session

The following topics have been covered during the workshop:

1. **Introduction and Epidemiology of Epilepsy:** In this session, facilitated by Mrs. Providence UMUZIGA, she presented to the participants the objectives of the training and the epidemiological situation of epilepsy and depression, more specifically: Problematic of epilepsy, epilepsy in Rwanda, Nursing interventions, neurological factors in depression and epilepsy.
2. **Epilepsy and co-morbid depression in Rwanda:** This session was facilitated by Associate Professor Sebera, who showed to participants findings of a study on the Prevalence of Epilepsy, Screening for Epilepsy, Treatment Outcome and Mortality as well as the Relationship between Epilepsy and Depression. More specifically, he explained the following points:
 - More details on Prevalence of epilepsy in Rwanda
 - Treatment outcomes on epilepsy
 - Mortality and SUDEP
 - Community health workers: role & importance
 - Epilepsy and depression as comorbidity

- PHQ-9: Optimal Kinyarwanda translated PHQ-9 , Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS) also validated in Kinyarwanda
- Study results

Throughout the presentation, all participants had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss around prevalence of epilepsy in Rwanda, Treatment outcome tertiary center & SUDEP, PHQ-9 validation in Kinyarwanda, Effectiveness CHW, Epilepsy & depression as co-morbidity and the study results.

- 3. Psychosocial Care:** For a better understanding, Mr. Edmond presented case studies, around which, the discussions were again engaged, inviting participants to propose diagnosis and treatment as well as care at the family and community level.

Resolutions and recommendations

At the end of all sessions and in conclusion, some resolutions and recommendations were formulated:

- Considering the way in which this training has brought to light many of the questions raised by mental health professionals about epilepsy in general, and epilepsy and depression in particular, the participants thought that this training program should be continued, in order to achieve capacity-building among health professionals and community health workers.
- Involve families and communities in the follow-up of patients and to fight stigma that increases the risk of depression for people with epilepsy

Finally, participants took the time to thank once again for this kind of opportunity to refresh their knowledge in order to ensure better management of epilepsy and depression.



Figure 1-Group Photo



Figure 2-Participants in session



Figure 3-Presentation



Figure 4-Presentation



Figure 5-Study case-role playing game



Figure 6-Participants