

SUBSIDISED PSYCHIATRY TREATMENT IN SELANGOR MENTAL SIHAT (SEHAT) PROGRAMME

Summary

With the COVID-19 pandemic hitting the nation in 2020, it can be seen that it has cted negatively on public health more so on mental health. The Selangor Menta Health (SEHAT) programme was introduced in 2021 and offered a holistic approach to mental health issues starting with advocacy, promotion, screening, and early intervention. SEHAT introduced a subsidised psychiatry treatment initiative in July 2022, providing substantial cost subsidisation of mental health treatment for lower socioeconomic groups. This landmark strategic purchasing initiative was pioneered by the Selangor state government together with the multidisciplinary expertise from International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

Keywords

Mental health, public health intervention, subsidised psychiatry, digital health

Introduction

Mental illness has gained its importance in public health over for past few years. It is estimated that half of the world's population lacks access to essential health services, including mental health services, for which effective care is limited (1). Several barriers to receiving care were noted to be lack of knowledge about the illness, stigmas on help-seeking, or financial constraints (2, 3). With the introduction of the subsidized psychiatry initiative, it enables communities and individuals to receive better quality and affordable care for their mental health conditions, regardless of their age or sociodemographic characteristics. This goes in line with the WHO goal of ensuring universal health coverage, where no one is left behind (4). Hence, this study aims to provide and explore an alternative mental health care access pathway for individuals seeking psychiatric treatment in Selangor

Methodology

In the Selangor SELangkah application, there is a mental health module, the Mental SEHAT which provides validated questionnaires to screen for users' level of mental health through DASS-21, PSS-10, PHO-9 and GDS-15. Based on their scores, users' will then be encouraged to follow the modules and watch more than 60 psychoeducational videos to have a better understanding of their situation Meanwhile, the establishment of the SEHAT hotline for those who are anxious and in distress, helps them reach trained counsellors via phone calls immediately. For those who have severe scores and wish to get the subsidised treatment, the flow process provided by the SEHAT programme is accessible and convenient since users will have to answer screening questionnaires for screening purposes through the SELangkah apps to screen their eligibility. Once eligible, they will be immediately referred by the SelCare (a healthcare programme under the Selangor state) clinics. Each patient will be given an approximation of three to five appointment slots with the psychiatrist. A total of 14 psychiatrists from the Malavsian Psychiatric Association (MPA) are involved in this subsidisation programme. Few of many are cooperative and compliant with treatments and follow-ups, having

Malaysian citizenship, and prioritising given for B40 group income.

Results

As of 1st March 2023, a total of 157 users had already registered for this subsidised psychiatric intervention programme. 132 of them were screened and referred to psychiatrists for further intervention, whereas the remaining 25 are still waiting for their first appointment with SelCare clinics for subsequent screening to re-assess their eligibility for the subsidisation programme. Out of the 700 slots offered, 396 were utilised by the 132 registered users, covering their consultations and treatments. The majority of the patients were 18 to 30 years old (47.5%), female (54.5%) and Malay ethnicity (59%).

Conclusion

This subsidised psychiatry initiative proved to play a significant role in getting people with mental health issues access to the treatment they needed. Several strategies can be made and improved to increase awareness of users who are currently in need but are not receiving treatment, which might be due to some barriers they met while trying to seek treatment. Accessibility through mobile apps encouraged those with mental health problems to reach out for help.



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