



**Ghana-UK Mental Health Alliance
(GUMHA)
August 2018**



Summary

This report details some of the exciting work that is taking place to help Ghana build a mental health service that aims to be a leader in African countries.

On the 10th July 2018 over 50 people met for a conference and workshop at the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) in London. This was a gathering of minds and expertise with Nurses, Doctors, Occupational Therapists and others – all wanting to do their part to improve mental health care in Ghana. This report will give feedback on the evaluation of the day and is being sent to everyone who attended.

Finally, the report details some forthcoming events that will be of interest.

10th July 2018 – Ghana Mental Health Support Conference

This exciting conference saw the bringing together of some many people who share the aim to improve mental health care in Ghana – there were excellent presentations that were informative, thought provoking and at times emotional. The speakers on the day are listed below:-

- Dr Cecilia Anim – President of the Royal College of Nursing
- Mercy Browne – Perinatal Mental Health
- Francis Adzinku – Education programmes
- Ursula Read – Health Research in Ghana
- Stella Nutakor – Besstel Child and Adult Health Charity
- Dilys Sillah – “Who will hear my cry”
- Dr Akwasi Osei- Mental Health Authority – Ghana (video)
- Rita De-Graft – Forensic Healthcare Visit
- Charles Acheampong – A Criminal Justice model



Some of the speakers and attendees of the day.

The conference was grateful to the RCN for the use of their amazing facilities and to the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust for funding the refreshments on the day.

In the afternoon session it was table-top work to identify what the most important next steps should be and it was also an opportunity to share stories. The list is too long to report in full – but there were some common themes that were agreed. These were as follows:-

- Public awareness of mental illness using the Ghana media to assist.
- Ghana Government and the High Commission need to be supporting our work.
- Working together, sharing knowledge and intelligence.
- The importance of the Churches and schools in all that we do – reducing stigma
- A formal link to one or more UK NHS Trusts
- Finding funding sources short term and Government commitment long term
- On-going meetings together to continue this work.

The evaluation demonstrated the success of the day –

POOR	FAIR	GOOD	VERY GOOD	EXCELLENT
0 %	0 %	10 %	49 %	41 %

“Compassion” and “Hope” were two common feedback comments. 23 people said they would volunteer to do more work in the future to improve Ghana mental health.



The conference organisers and members of “Ghana-UK Mental Health Alliance”

IMPORTANT

The Ghana-UK Mental Health Alliance have started a closed Facebook group as a recommendation from the conference – we urge you all to join it and share information and updates.

Coming Events

October will be a busy month with two major events happening in Ghana and a number of people travelling over.

15th – 17th October – the 4th Mental Health and Well-being Conference being held in Kumasi. Charles Acheampong, Chair of the Ghana-UK Mental Health Authority said –



“Myself, Rita De-Graft and Peter Hasler will be attending this conference and speaking to people about our project to support the criminal justice system and mental health in Ghana. “

Charles Acheampong

22nd October – 2nd November 2018 – The Besstel Foundation have organised a series of events in Accra and Cape Coast working closely with the Ankaful Hospital called – “Culture Bound – Stigma in Mental Health.” Co-Director of the Besstel Foundation – Stella Nutakor said –



“This will be part of our twice yearly visits to Ghana and an exciting opportunity to address the very real stigma that people with mental illness experience. We hope that Ankaful Hospital will move forward very positively into the future.”

Stella Ewarajoa Nutakor

Final message

At our conference in July we were reminded by Dr Ursula Read (Health Researcher) what the research is telling us -

- One in four people in Ghana suffer from a mental illness.
- A lot of mental illness in Ghana is caused by smoking cannabis.
- Most people believe that mental illness is caused by spiritual factors.
- Families often abandon their mentally ill relatives.
- People go to traditional healers or pastors instead of mental health services.
- We need to educate people on the fact that mental illness is a medical condition then they will use mental health services.
- If we implement the Mental Health Act then people will stop chaining people with mental illness.

Ibrahim, et al 2016 Pathways to psychiatric care for mental disorders: a retrospective study of patients seeking mental health services at a public psychiatric facility in Ghana. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* 10(1):63.



A massive vote of thanks goes to British Airways who have agreed to give us free extra baggage allowance for those travelling to Ghana in October. This will allow us to bring much needed equipment, clothes and linen especially for Ankaful Hospital.

If you are interested in getting involved - Please make contact with:-

- Charles Acheampong – Ghana-UK Mental Health Alliance
Chairman / Founder – charlesacheampong@yahoo.co.uk
- Stella Nutakor – Besstel Foundation
Co-Director – ewuradoasbt@yahoo.co.uk
- Peter Hasler – Secretary / Editor– pvasler@gmail.com