

Scaling up care for mental, neurological, and substance use disorders: mhGAP

Mental, neurological and substance use disorders are highly prevalent and burdensome globally. The gap between what is urgently needed and what is available to reduce the burden is still very wide.

WHO recognizes the need for action to reduce the burden, and to enhance the capacity of Member States to respond to this growing challenge. The WHO Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) aims at scaling up services for mental, neurological and substance use disorders in countries, especially those in the low- and middle-income categories.

Since it was introduced in 2008, mhGAP has been introduced in over 100 countries, so that many people have been treated for depression, schizophrenia, and epilepsy, prevented from suicide and supported to lead normal lives – even where resources are scarce

The priority conditions addressed by mhGAP are: depression, psychoses, suicidal ideation, epilepsy, dementia, disorders due to use of alcohol and psychoactive substances, mental and behavioural disorders in children and other conditions including medically unexplained somatic complaints and emotional, physical or behavioural problems after exposure to an extreme stressor.

Successful scaling up is the joint responsibility of governments, health professionals, civil society, communities, and families, with support from the international community. The essence of mhGAP is building partnerships for collective action.