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Training programme for doctors, community workers



BALM director Vandana Gopikumar (left) signs an MoU with FPAI President Sujatha Natarajan at the inauguration of a two day training session for doctors and community workers on 'Mental health and community' in Chennai. AVM Charities Chairperson Meena Veerappan (third from left) and film Director S. P. Muthuraman are in the picture. Photo: R. Shivaji Rao The hindu

Community workers form the driving force behind the health initiatives taken to address the medical needs of socially and economically disadvantaged groups of people — this idea set the context for a two-day training programme for doctors and community workers, inaugurated here on Monday.

The programme on 'mental health and community' initiated by The Family Planning Association of India (FPAI), in collaboration with the Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health (BALM), focusses on the integration of mental health services with other community health initiatives.

Sujatha Natarajan, president, FPAI, emphasised the need to include mental health services in the area of family health and welfare, to empower women with the freedom to make their own reproductive choices.

Thirty community workers are being trained under this programme to understand the medical and psycho-social conditions of mental health and the various approaches to mental illness, Ms. Natarajan said. Six general practitioners will impart primary mental health intervention to people identified with mental illness, she added.

Rather than adopting a 'crisis intervention' approach that most urban mental health care units resort to, the whole idea of the initiative was to identify people with mental illness and treat them at the primary level, said Vandana Gopikumar, director, BALM.

"Lack of both human medical resources and access to mental health care are huge concerns," she said, adding that localised healthcare facilities will help in reducing the burden of mentally ill patients from hospitals.

The community workers were introduced to the various forms and symptoms of mental disorders, mental retardation and behavioural disorders, through recreational and interactive activities.

The city has been divided in different areas and allotted to different workers to ease the flow of medical operations and counselling services, said Ms Natarajan. "We also have 'barefooted' counsellors to help us render medical services to people living at distant places," she added.

Film Director S. P. Muthuraman, AVM Charities president Meena Veerappan and FPAI Secretary Jyothi Kasiviswanathan were present at the meeting.

Keywords: [health issue](#), [training programme](#), [community workers](#), [doctors](#), [FPAI](#)

