

Seeking a paradigm shift in mental health care

WHO's guidance on community mental health services balances care and support with rights and participation

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Vibrant hand drawn illustration depicting mindfulness concept.

Recently, a High Court suggested that homeless persons with health conditions be branded with a permanent tattoo, when vaccinated against COVID-19, since tracking a 'floating population' may be cumbersome. Earlier judgments have also suggested 'round ups' of such persons to facilitate pathways into care. These are possibly well-intentioned directives, but what follows is that bewildered persons are huddled in a vehicle and

admitted into shelters or mental hospitals that are usually crowded, yet lonely. What does this tell us about the way homelessness and mental illness are regarded in 'polite' society?

Persons with mental health conditions need a responsive care system that inspires hope and participation without which their lives are empty. In many countries, persons with severe mental health conditions live in shackles in their homes, in overcrowded hospitals, and even in prison. On the other hand, many persons with mental health issues live and even die alone on the streets.

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