

Be inspired and Get Active mental health football programme kicks off at Butabika Psychiatric referral hospital to promote Physical Health in Mental health services in Uganda

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Background

Globally, a major barrier to the health of people with mental health experiences remains the stigma, social exclusion and negative attitudes attached to mental health problems. People with serious mental health problems continue to have increased rates of physical illness compared to the general population, leading to premature death and reduced life expectancy (Robson and Gray, 2007), (Hardy and Gray 2014).

Given that almost 30% of the population in Uganda experiences a mental health issue at some point in their lives (Kasoro, Sebudde et al, 2002), it begs a question of Why, then, do we find it so hard to talk about something that's so prevalent?

The Burden of NCDs and mental health

Four major chronic NCDs – cardiovascular disease (CVD), cancer, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) – are responsible for the majority of preventable deaths in the world. There are major co-morbidities between these physical diseases and mental disorders. Together, these diseases cause unnecessary suffering and lead to long-term ill health and disability, thus depriving millions of the opportunity to enjoy a productive life and healthy, active ageing (Robson and Gray, 2007; Hardy and Gray 2014). While the causes are multi-faceted and complex, the major physical NCDs can largely be prevented by addressing the common risk factors of tobacco use, unhealthy diet, harmful use of alcohol and physical inactivity. If these risks were eliminated, up to three-quarters of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes and 40 per cent of cancer would be prevented or delayed (Robson and Gray, 2007; Hardy and Gray 2014). However, mental illness is also a risk factor for NCDs (Hardy and Gray 2014). The presence of mental illness increases the chance that an individual will suffer from one or more NCD and be less likely to seek help and adhere to treatment (Hardy and Gray 2014) .

While many of the levers for prevention are outside the control of the health sector, there is much that local communities and individuals, with the right knowledge and skills, can contribute to the prevention of NCDs in their own lives as well as among patients, families and communities. Promoting healthy behaviours and lifestyles can also help to close the gap in health inequalities, and reduce the burden of avoidable ill health.

To fulfil this potential, two Local community based Ugandan professional football teams Kira Young FC and SC Villa Jogoo have agreed to support an initiative for the implementation of a physical healthcare strategy at Butabika hospital and Initiate the development of physical health projects in local communities and their football fan base.

The collaborative effort of various organisations, including policy makers at local and national level, is hoped will successfully help in facilitating this physical health awareness towards NCD disease prevention among people with mental health problems. This highlights also opportunities to bring in other resources and partnerships which is crucial to the success of this initiative in the long term. It is also hope that this initiative will encourage empowerment, advocacy and service user involvement in their communities and mental health care delivery through developed life skills.

Dr David Basangwa the Executive medical Director of Butabika hospital has taken a front line lead in ensuring that sports forms part of the recovery and rehabilitation process for those with mental health challenges in Uganda.



Picture Above: Dr David Basangwa the Executive medical Director of Butabika hospital receives The "get active/ be inspired" physical health / Anti stigma mental health sports programme" Trophy from Moses Mulimira of Uganda Diaspora Health Foundation.





Pictures above, Butabika Hospital football team with Professional football Players from Kira Young FC for a football match at Butabika Hospital grounds



Sports club Villa Professional football players offering their support to using sports in mental health initiatives in Uganda



The football initiative also aims to engage children and women empowerment projects

With discussions for this event to be regular fixture in mental health settings in across Uganda, The "get active/ be inspired" physical health / Anti stigma mental health sports programme is a prime example of the potential for sport to promote awareness and reduce stigma at community level.

The long term aim of this sports initiative in Uganda is to create a mental health league which will bridge the gap between hospital and community living, provide meaningful activities and to break down barriers of stigma and inclusion within the local communities by educating and normalising mental health. This is built on the premise that football can be an acceptable way for local communities to become more physically active and engage, which can help promote health benefits and recovery. It aims to increase socialisation, rehabilitation and wellbeing. Delivery will consist of

both professional football clubs Kira Young FC and SC Villa supplying highly qualified coaching staff who delivers football coaching sessions and other football-related activities. Healthcare specialists will work alongside the football coaches enabling aspects of the clients existing programme of care to be delivered simultaneously. This will increase the accessibility of their current care programme and heighten the ability of the healthcare providers to deliver their health services. Its hoped that this initiative will bring communities together through sports and develop women's sports initiatives.

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