

## G. MENTAL HEALTH SITUATION IN MOROCCO: PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

Driss Moussaoui, MD

The Moroccan population is about 28 million people, predominantly young. The existing sectors in the fields of psychiatry and mental health are academic, public health, private, and military. Despite significant progress, there are only 250 psychiatrists practicing in Morocco. However, 25 years ago, fewer than 10 were practicing. There are also about 50 clinical psychologists, 300 specialized nurses in psychiatry, and only a few social workers. On the other hand, there are about 1900 psychiatric beds in hospitals or in psychiatric wards of general hospitals in major cities.

### ACADEMIC AND CARE ACTIVITIES

Only three university psychiatric departments employ a total of 11 professors of psychiatry and 10 assistant professors:

—The Ibn Rushd University Psychiatric Center of Casablanca (104 beds) is a collaborating center with WHO for training and research in mental health.

—The psychiatric hospital Ar-razi in Rabat-Sale has a capacity of 170 beds.

—The departments of psychiatry of Marrakech started 4 years ago.

These departments serve as teaching institutions for undergraduates, postgraduates and psychiatric nurses, but also as first line, emergency psychiatry units. In Casablanca for example, the 104 beds serve a catchment area of 5 million inhabitants, for whom it is the only emergency institution.

### NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

The development of a mental health program by the Ministry of

Health in 1993 did not fulfill their expectations as related to the mental health needs of the community, both qualitatively and quantitatively. However, a number of activities of various NGOs try to promote the fields of psychiatry and mental health and to fill the gaps. The most active organization is the League for Mental Health, based in Casablanca. Among its achievements is the creation of an 80-bed unit in the Ibn Rushd University Psychiatric Center, as well as regularly paying the salaries of 15 staff members of that center. Another NGO, based in Casablanca, works in the field of substance abuse prevention.

An important step has been taken by the Ministry of Health by launching a national survey on the prevalence of mental disorders in the general population, which is currently in the phase of data analysis.

### RESEARCH

Since the early 80s, a steady growth of research in mental health and psychiatry (epidemiologic, social, biologic, psychopharmacologic, and clinical research) occurred. Cultural impact on mental disorders has been particularly studied (eg, suicidal attempts and practicing religion, impact of Ramadan fasting on various aspects of mental health, drug use and abuse, traditional healing).

### INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

This collaboration is an important part of the activity in Casablanca, both on the regional level (Maghrebian countries, World Health Organization region Eastern Mediterranean Regional

---

From Ibn Rushd University Psychiatric Center, Casablanca, Morocco.

Office (EMRO), and on the global scene. The collaboration is especially strong with the World Psychiatric Association, in which the author served

as a member of the executive committee for six years, and in which he serves currently as chairman of the ethics committee.

In short, much has been realized during the past two decades, but more effort is needed, mainly for patients in remote areas.