

HIV/AIDS Mental Health Expert Centre and Treatment Team, Amsterdam

Example of an integrated approach to HIV/AIDS and mental health and the challenges faced

Annemiek Schadé
GGZ buitenamstel/VU Medical Centre
Amsterdam

HIV/AIDS in the Netherlands 2007

12.000 (23.000) Hiv+

- 48 % Homosexual men
- 35% Sub-Saharan
- 15% Caribbean
- 1% IDUs
- 1% Others

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- 1982- HIV/AIDS in the Netherlands

Amsterdam:

- 1986-first contact between psychiatric institutions about patients with AIDS
- 1987-official treatment team

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Multi-disciplinary team

- Marieke Been-community mental health nurse
- Ton Schreurs-psychologist
- Arie Noordam-psychotherapist
- Hanna Uhr-psychologist
- Annemiek Schadé-psychiatrist-project manager

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Activities

- Treatment of PLHA with mental health problems
- Education programs
- Consultation
- Scientific research
- MAIDS-project GIP

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Patients' characteristics:

- 180 patients, 100 new patients per year
- Mainly: depression, grief, personality disorders, problems with (unsafe)sex
- Also: psychosis, addiction, dementia
- Often: multiple diagnosis, problems with work, money, friends, family, hospital, non-adherence
- Often: shame, guilt, (self)stigma, discrimination

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Patients' characteristics:

- Age 20-65
- Almost all patients are monitored by specialized HIV-clinics
- Infected for several weeks-20 years
- Some patients are not infected (or don't know), but at risk

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Method of working:

- Referrals from family doctors, infectiologists, 'HIV-Union', organization for homosexuals, PLHA
- In-take, treatment plan, multi-disciplinary consultation, frequent evaluation, contact with family doctors, infectiologists etc.

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Difficulties and Challenges:

Infectiologists, family doctors, PLHA have:

- Lack of knowledge on the subject HIV/AIDS and mental health
- Resistance towards and fear for mental health problems
- Fear of stigma (Africans)
- “Mental health problems are not important, HIV/AIDS is more important”
- Infectiologists think they can treat mental health problems themselves

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Difficulties and Challenges, solutions:

- Essential: an enthusiastic, multidisciplinary and good treatment team, with sufficient treatment facilities and some money for 'extra things' like education programs
- Essential knowledge on HIV/AIDS and its treatment options

AND

- Member of mental health treatment team present during meetings of infectiologists
- Dual-treatment, for example psychiatrist and infectiologists together

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Difficulties and Challenges, solutions:

- Frequent contact with the hospitals, infectiologists, family doctors, 'HIV-Union', PLHA
- Treatment options for HIV and mental health in one building
- Education programs, consultation
- Visibility, publicity

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It takes time, energy, money and enthusiasm to become a good mental health expert centre and treatment team

