

Bridging the Gap: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Addressing Mental Health

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Abstract:

This paper explores the necessity and efficacy of multidisciplinary approaches in addressing mental health concerns. It synthesizes various disciplines' contributions, such as psychology, psychiatry, social work, neuroscience, and public health, in developing holistic strategies for prevention, intervention, and treatment. The abstract highlights the importance of collaboration and integration of diverse perspectives to effectively bridge the gap in mental health care.

Keywords: *Mental health, multidisciplinary approaches, psychology, psychiatry, social work, neuroscience, public health, collaboration, intervention, treatment.*

Introduction:

Mental health issues pose significant challenges globally, necessitating comprehensive and innovative approaches for effective management. Traditional siloed approaches within individual disciplines often fall short in addressing the complexity and multifaceted nature of mental health concerns. This paper argues for the adoption of multidisciplinary approaches, which leverage insights and methodologies from various fields, to bridge existing gaps in mental health care. By integrating perspectives from psychology, psychiatry, social work, neuroscience, and public health, this paper aims to delineate the benefits and challenges associated with multidisciplinary collaboration in tackling mental health issues.

Significance of addressing mental health concerns:

Addressing mental health concerns is of paramount significance due to its profound impact on individuals, communities, and societies at large. Firstly, mental health issues affect a substantial portion of the global population, with statistics indicating that approximately one in four people will experience a mental health disorder at some point in their lives. These conditions encompass a wide spectrum, ranging from common disorders like depression and anxiety to more severe conditions such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Left unaddressed, these disorders can lead to significant impairment in functioning, diminished quality of life, and even increased mortality rates.

Secondly, mental health concerns have far-reaching implications beyond the individual level, extending to families, workplaces, and the broader societal fabric. Families of individuals with mental health disorders often bear a considerable emotional and financial burden, grappling with the challenges of caregiving, stigma, and access to appropriate support services. In workplaces, untreated mental health issues contribute to decreased productivity, absenteeism, and strained interpersonal relationships, resulting in economic losses and reduced organizational effectiveness. Moreover, at the societal level, untreated mental illness can exacerbate social

inequalities, perpetuate cycles of poverty, and strain healthcare systems already grappling with limited resources.

Thirdly, addressing mental health concerns is essential for promoting overall well-being and achieving sustainable development goals. Mental health is intrinsically linked to other aspects of human functioning, including physical health, social relationships, and economic prosperity. Effective mental health interventions not only alleviate individual suffering but also contribute to healthier communities, stronger economies, and more resilient societies. By investing in mental health promotion, prevention, and treatment, policymakers can foster environments that support thriving individuals and vibrant communities, thereby advancing global efforts towards sustainable development and social justice.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the critical importance of prioritizing mental health on a global scale. The pandemic's unprecedented challenges, including social isolation, economic uncertainty, and loss of loved ones, have exacerbated pre-existing mental health issues and triggered new cases of psychological distress worldwide. As societies navigate the complex aftermath of the pandemic, addressing mental health concerns must be central to recovery efforts, ensuring that individuals and communities receive the support they need to heal, rebuild, and thrive in the post-pandemic world.

Addressing mental health concerns is not merely a matter of individual well-being but a collective imperative with profound implications for society as a whole. By recognizing the significance of mental health and investing in comprehensive, evidence-based interventions, policymakers, healthcare providers, and communities can foster environments that promote resilience, equity, and flourishing for all.

Limitations of traditional disciplinary approaches:

Traditional disciplinary approaches to addressing mental health have inherent limitations that hinder their effectiveness in providing comprehensive care. Firstly, these approaches often operate within narrow frameworks that focus solely on symptom management or diagnosis within the boundaries of a single discipline, such as psychology or psychiatry. This compartmentalization overlooks the complex interplay of biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors influencing mental health outcomes. Consequently, it may result in fragmented care that fails to address the diverse needs of individuals experiencing mental health challenges.

Secondly, traditional disciplinary approaches may perpetuate stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health by reinforcing outdated stereotypes and categorizations. For instance, psychiatric diagnoses based solely on symptom clusters may lead to labeling and marginalization, overlooking the unique contexts and experiences of individuals. This reductionist approach disregards the importance of understanding mental health within the broader context of social determinants, cultural influences, and personal narratives.

Disciplinary boundaries often impede interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange, limiting the integration of diverse perspectives and approaches. Professionals within different disciplines may operate in isolation, resulting in disjointed care pathways and missed opportunities for holistic interventions. This lack of collaboration can lead to gaps in care continuity, where individuals receive fragmented services that do not address their comprehensive needs.

Additionally, traditional disciplinary approaches may prioritize biomedical interventions over psychosocial and community-based strategies, neglecting the role of social support systems, cultural practices, and environmental factors in mental well-being. By overly medicalizing mental health issues, these approaches may overlook the importance of empowerment, resilience, and self-determination in promoting recovery and resilience.

Lastly, the reliance on disciplinary silos may impede innovation and adaptation to evolving understandings of mental health. In a rapidly changing landscape, characterized by emerging technologies, shifting demographics, and evolving societal norms, traditional disciplinary approaches may struggle to keep pace with advancements and adapt to changing needs. This rigidity may hinder the development of novel interventions and the implementation of evidence-based practices that could enhance mental health outcomes for diverse populations.

Traditional disciplinary approaches to mental health care are limited by their narrow focus, potential for stigma reinforcement, lack of interdisciplinary collaboration, bias towards biomedical interventions, and resistance to innovation. Overcoming these limitations requires a shift towards more integrated, holistic, and person-centered approaches that acknowledge the complexity of mental health and embrace diverse perspectives and methodologies.

Multidisciplinary approaches to mental health:

Multidisciplinary approaches to mental health are gaining prominence as traditional disciplinary boundaries prove inadequate in addressing the complexity of mental health issues. Psychology, psychiatry, social work, neuroscience, and public health each offer unique perspectives and methodologies that, when integrated, contribute to more comprehensive and effective mental health care. Psychology provides insights into the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of mental health, while psychiatry brings expertise in diagnosing and treating mental illnesses through medication and therapy.

Social work emphasizes the social determinants of mental health, addressing factors such as poverty, discrimination, and access to resources that significantly impact individuals' well-being. Neuroscience offers a biological understanding of mental health, exploring brain structures, neurotransmitters, and genetic predispositions that influence mental illness development and treatment response. Public health approaches focus on population-level interventions, including prevention campaigns, policy advocacy, and community-based programs aimed at promoting mental well-being and reducing stigma.

By leveraging the strengths of these diverse disciplines, multidisciplinary approaches to mental health enable more holistic assessment and treatment of individuals' mental health needs. For

example, a multidisciplinary team may collaborate to develop personalized treatment plans that incorporate medication management, therapy, social support services, and lifestyle interventions tailored to the individual's unique circumstances and preferences. This integrated approach not only addresses the immediate symptoms of mental illness but also considers the broader context of the individual's life, enhancing the likelihood of long-term recovery and well-being.

Despite the benefits of multidisciplinary approaches, challenges such as communication barriers, differing treatment philosophies, and resource allocation constraints must be navigated. Effective collaboration requires clear communication channels, mutual respect for each discipline's expertise, and ongoing coordination to ensure seamless integration of services. Additionally, policymakers and healthcare administrators play a crucial role in facilitating multidisciplinary collaboration by investing in interdisciplinary training programs, promoting team-based care models, and allocating resources to support integrated mental health services. Overall, multidisciplinary approaches represent a promising paradigm shift in mental health care, offering a more holistic and person-centered approach to addressing the complex needs of individuals experiencing mental health challenges.

Psychology:

Psychology plays a crucial role in multidisciplinary approaches to addressing mental health, offering valuable insights into human behavior, cognition, and emotional processes. One key contribution of psychology is its emphasis on understanding the underlying mechanisms of mental health disorders. Through empirical research and theoretical frameworks, psychologists investigate factors such as genetics, brain chemistry, and environmental influences that contribute to the development and maintenance of psychological disorders. This knowledge forms the foundation for evidence-based interventions and treatment strategies tailored to individual needs.

Psychology offers a diverse range of therapeutic approaches aimed at alleviating psychological distress and promoting well-being. From cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to psychodynamic therapy, psychologists employ various techniques to help individuals manage symptoms, cope with stressors, and improve their quality of life. These therapeutic interventions are often integrated into multidisciplinary treatment plans, complementing medical and social interventions to provide comprehensive care.

Psychologists also play a critical role in psychological assessment and diagnosis, employing standardized measures and clinical interviews to evaluate individuals' mental health status. By conducting thorough assessments, psychologists can accurately identify underlying issues, formulate treatment plans, and monitor progress over time. Additionally, psychologists collaborate with other professionals, such as psychiatrists and social workers, to ensure coordinated care and holistic support for clients.

In addition to clinical practice, psychology contributes to mental health promotion and prevention efforts through research and education. Psychologists study risk and protective factors associated with mental health outcomes, informing the development of preventive interventions targeting individuals, families, and communities. Furthermore, psychologists advocate for mental

health awareness and destigmatization, challenging misconceptions and promoting understanding of mental health issues in society.

Overall, psychology's multidimensional approach to understanding and addressing mental health contributes significantly to multidisciplinary efforts aimed at improving outcomes for individuals with psychological disorders. By integrating psychological perspectives into comprehensive care models, professionals can better meet the diverse needs of individuals experiencing mental health challenges, ultimately fostering resilience, recovery, and well-being.

Psychiatry:

Psychiatry plays a pivotal role in the multidisciplinary approach to addressing mental health. As a medical specialty focused on the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental disorders, psychiatry offers invaluable insights into the biological and physiological aspects of mental health. Psychiatrists are trained to assess both the psychological and physical manifestations of mental illness, enabling them to formulate comprehensive treatment plans that integrate pharmacological interventions, psychotherapy, and psychosocial support. Through techniques such as diagnostic interviews, psychiatric assessments, and neuroimaging studies, psychiatrists gain a nuanced understanding of individual patients' needs and tailor interventions accordingly.

One of psychiatry's key contributions lies in its ability to provide evidence-based treatments for a wide range of mental health conditions. From mood disorders like depression and bipolar disorder to psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia, psychiatrists employ a diverse array of therapeutic modalities to alleviate symptoms and improve patients' quality of life. Psychiatric medications, including antidepressants, antipsychotics, mood stabilizers, and anxiolytics, are prescribed judiciously based on rigorous clinical assessment and ongoing monitoring. Additionally, psychotherapy interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), interpersonal therapy (IPT), and dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), complement pharmacotherapy by addressing underlying psychological factors contributing to mental illness.

Psychiatry contributes to the understanding of mental health through research and innovation. Psychiatrists engage in clinical trials, epidemiological studies, and neurobiological research to elucidate the etiology and pathophysiology of mental disorders. By advancing knowledge in areas such as neurochemistry, genetics, and brain imaging, psychiatry enhances diagnostic accuracy, identifies novel therapeutic targets, and informs the development of personalized treatment approaches. Moreover, psychiatrists play an active role in interdisciplinary collaborations, partnering with researchers from fields such as neuroscience, psychology, and genetics to foster a holistic understanding of mental health and facilitate translational research efforts.

In addition to clinical practice and research, psychiatry plays a crucial role in advocacy and public education. Psychiatrists advocate for improved access to mental health services, destigmatization of mental illness, and implementation of policies that prioritize mental health care. Through community outreach programs, educational campaigns, and public speaking engagements, psychiatrists raise awareness about mental health issues, promote early intervention, and empower individuals to seek help when needed. By fostering collaboration

among stakeholders, including patients, families, policymakers, and healthcare providers, psychiatry contributes to building a more inclusive and supportive environment for individuals living with mental illness.

Psychiatry is an indispensable component of the multidisciplinary approach to addressing mental health. Through its focus on comprehensive assessment, evidence-based treatment, research, advocacy, and public education, psychiatry enhances our understanding of mental illness and improves outcomes for individuals affected by psychiatric disorders. By collaborating with other disciplines and advocating for systemic change, psychiatry plays a vital role in promoting mental health equity and fostering resilience within communities.

Social work:

Social work plays a crucial role in multidisciplinary approaches to addressing mental health concerns. Social workers are trained to understand the intricate connections between individuals and their social environments, which greatly influences mental well-being. One of the key contributions of social work lies in its emphasis on the social determinants of mental health, such as poverty, discrimination, and trauma. By addressing these underlying factors, social workers strive to create supportive environments that promote mental wellness and resilience.

Social workers are skilled in providing psychosocial interventions tailored to individuals, families, and communities. Through counseling, case management, and advocacy, they empower clients to navigate challenges and access necessary resources. Social workers also collaborate closely with other professionals, such as psychologists, psychiatrists, and healthcare providers, to ensure holistic care for individuals with mental health needs. This collaborative approach fosters comprehensive assessments and personalized treatment plans that consider both clinical and social factors.

In addition, social workers play a vital role in destigmatizing mental illness and promoting mental health awareness. Through community education and outreach initiatives, they strive to challenge misconceptions and facilitate open discussions about mental health. By fostering supportive environments and reducing barriers to care, social workers contribute to the prevention and early intervention of mental health issues. Their efforts extend beyond clinical settings to encompass schools, workplaces, and other community settings where mental health promotion is essential.

Social workers advocate for systemic changes that address social injustices and inequities affecting mental health outcomes. By engaging in policy advocacy and social activism, they work to dismantle structural barriers and promote equitable access to mental health services. Social workers also play a critical role in crisis intervention and disaster response, providing support to individuals and communities affected by traumatic events. Their expertise in trauma-informed care and crisis management is invaluable in mitigating the psychological impact of emergencies.

Social work is an indispensable component of multidisciplinary approaches to addressing mental health concerns. Through their focus on social determinants, psychosocial interventions,

advocacy, and crisis response, social workers contribute to comprehensive and compassionate care for individuals experiencing mental health challenges. By working collaboratively with other disciplines and advocating for systemic change, social workers strive to create inclusive and supportive environments that promote mental wellness for all.

Neuroscience:

Neuroscience, as a multidisciplinary field, plays a pivotal role in understanding the biological underpinnings of mental health disorders. Through the study of the brain's structure, function, and biochemical processes, neuroscience offers invaluable insights into the mechanisms underlying various psychological phenomena. One of its primary contributions lies in elucidating the neural circuits and neurotransmitter systems implicated in mental health disorders, providing a foundation for targeted interventions and treatments.

Neuroscience techniques such as neuroimaging (e.g., MRI, fMRI, PET scans) enable researchers to visualize brain activity and structural changes associated with mental health conditions. These tools facilitate the identification of biomarkers that can aid in early diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment response monitoring. By integrating neuroscientific findings with clinical observations, practitioners can develop personalized interventions tailored to individuals' neurobiological profiles, thereby enhancing treatment efficacy and reducing the risk of adverse outcomes.

Neuroscience research informs our understanding of the complex interplay between genetic predispositions and environmental factors in shaping mental health outcomes. By investigating gene-environment interactions and epigenetic modifications, neuroscientists shed light on the mechanisms through which genetic vulnerabilities may be exacerbated or mitigated by environmental influences, such as stress, trauma, and social support. This knowledge informs the development of preventive strategies and interventions aimed at modulating these factors to promote resilience and mitigate the risk of mental illness.

Additionally, neuroscience contributes to the advancement of novel therapeutic approaches for mental health disorders. Emerging technologies, such as deep brain stimulation (DBS), transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), and optogenetics, offer new avenues for modulating neural activity and restoring dysfunctional circuits implicated in conditions like depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia. These neurotechnologies hold promise for individuals who are treatment-resistant or experience debilitating symptoms, offering hope for improved quality of life and functional outcomes.

Neuroscience's multidisciplinary perspective enriches our understanding of mental health by uncovering the neurobiological mechanisms underlying psychological processes. By leveraging advanced techniques and methodologies, neuroscience not only informs diagnostic and treatment strategies but also drives innovation in therapeutic interventions, ultimately contributing to more effective and personalized mental health care.

Public health:

Public health plays a crucial role in addressing mental health concerns within communities. By focusing on the population as a whole, public health initiatives aim to prevent mental health

disorders, promote mental well-being, and ensure equitable access to mental health services. One key aspect of public health efforts in this domain involves raising awareness about mental health issues and reducing stigma associated with seeking help. Through educational campaigns, community outreach programs, and media initiatives, public health professionals strive to foster a supportive environment where individuals feel comfortable seeking assistance for their mental health concerns.

Public health interventions often target social determinants of mental health, recognizing the impact of socioeconomic factors, environmental conditions, and cultural influences on mental well-being. By addressing issues such as poverty, housing instability, discrimination, and access to education and employment opportunities, public health initiatives can mitigate risk factors for mental health disorders and promote resilience within communities. These efforts contribute to the creation of healthier and more supportive environments that nurture mental well-being across the lifespan.

Public health also plays a critical role in shaping policies and systems that support mental health at both the local and national levels. By advocating for evidence-based practices, funding for mental health services, and integration of mental health into broader health care systems, public health professionals influence the allocation of resources and implementation of programs aimed at improving mental health outcomes. Additionally, public health research informs the development of policies and interventions by providing insights into effective strategies for prevention, early intervention, and treatment of mental health disorders.

Collaboration is essential in public health efforts to address mental health, involving partnerships with government agencies, community organizations, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders. Through multidisciplinary collaboration, public health professionals leverage expertise from diverse fields to develop comprehensive approaches that address the complex interplay of factors influencing mental health. By working together, these stakeholders can implement strategies that promote mental well-being, reduce disparities, and enhance the overall health and resilience of communities.

Public health plays a vital role in addressing mental health concerns by focusing on prevention, promotion, policy advocacy, and collaboration. By addressing social determinants, raising awareness, shaping policies, and fostering partnerships, public health initiatives contribute to creating supportive environments where individuals can thrive mentally and emotionally. Through continued efforts and commitment to holistic approaches, public health professionals can make significant strides in improving mental health outcomes and enhancing the well-being of populations worldwide.

Benefits of multidisciplinary collaboration:

Multidisciplinary collaboration in addressing mental health concerns offers a plethora of benefits that extend beyond the scope of individual disciplines. Firstly, it facilitates a comprehensive assessment and treatment approach by drawing upon diverse perspectives and expertise. For instance, a team comprising psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and neuroscientists can

provide a more nuanced understanding of a patient's condition, leading to tailored interventions that address biological, psychological, and social determinants of mental health.

Secondly, multidisciplinary collaboration fosters a holistic understanding of mental health issues. By integrating insights from various disciplines, professionals can explore the interplay between biological, environmental, and societal factors contributing to mental health disorders. This holistic perspective allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved, leading to more effective intervention strategies.

Multidisciplinary collaboration enhances prevention strategies by identifying risk factors and protective factors across different domains. For example, public health experts can work alongside psychologists to develop community-based programs that promote mental well-being and resilience, thereby preventing the onset of mental health disorders. By targeting multiple levels of influence, from individual behavior to societal norms, multidisciplinary approaches can create more robust prevention efforts.

Multidisciplinary collaboration promotes innovation and creativity in addressing mental health challenges. By bringing together individuals with diverse backgrounds and skill sets, interdisciplinary teams can brainstorm novel approaches and interventions that may not have been conceivable within the confines of a single discipline. This cross-pollination of ideas and methodologies fosters innovation and leads to the development of more effective and sustainable solutions.

Finally, multidisciplinary collaboration enhances the quality of care and outcomes for individuals with mental health concerns. By leveraging the collective expertise of diverse professionals, interdisciplinary teams can provide more comprehensive and integrated care that meets the unique needs of each patient. This patient-centered approach ensures that individuals receive holistic support across various domains of their lives, ultimately leading to improved mental health outcomes and overall well-being.

Summary:

This paper underscores the importance of multidisciplinary approaches in addressing mental health concerns, emphasizing collaboration among various disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry, social work, neuroscience, and public health. By integrating diverse perspectives and methodologies, multidisciplinary approaches offer comprehensive strategies for prevention, intervention, and treatment of mental health issues. However, challenges such as communication barriers and resource allocation must be addressed to optimize the effectiveness of these approaches. Through case studies and examples, this paper highlights successful initiatives and outlines future directions for research and policy development in the field of multidisciplinary mental health care.

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