

FOUNTAIN HOUSE, LAHORE—A UNIQUE EXPERIEMENT IN CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION

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SUMMARY

Fountain House has passed through various developmental stages. It has adopted the ideology of a club-house from Fountain House, New York, along with a number of innovative programmes for the rehabilitation of the mentally ill. Through a process of constant experimentation and evaluation, it has evolved a programme and an ideological framework which is in keeping with the religious and cultural requirements of the members served by Fountain House, Lahore.

Fountain House, Lahore, has the distinction of being a unique project in the developing countries in the challenging area of offering psychiatric care and rehabilitation. The original model of psychiatric services associated with Fountain House was developed in the 50s and 60s at Fountain House, New York. When Lahore Mental Health Association sought financial and technical assistance from the Department of Health, Education and Social Welfare, Washington, U. S. A. for the establishment of a special Rehabilitation project for the mentally ill in Lahore, Pakistan, a collaborative link was established with Fountain House, New York.

Rehabilitation Centre in Lahore was started in 1971 as a Half-way House. But very soon as a result of the exchange visits between the Project at Lahore and Fountain House, New York, the Centre at Lahore and its programme was organised along same pattern as at Fountain House, New York. It was, however, felt desirable to modify various components of the programme which would suit special needs of the persons served by Fountain House, Lahore. A close collaboration between the two has shown that inspite of diverse cultural settings,

the basic ideology can be intimately shared and preserved.

The fundamental ideology of Fountain House model is extremely simple. It believes that most of the suffering of the mentally ill is caused by their isolation from the Society. The image of a mentally ill person usually presented in the medical text books is that of a person considered unfit for human companionship and, therefore, the Society evolved a procedure of confining them behind high walls and locked doors. The basic need of the mentally ill was therefore reclaiming their right of self respect and personal dignity. All the services associated with the Fountain House Model stem from this basic concern.

The following are the important components of the Fountain House model :

CLUB HOUSE FOR MEMBERS

The original Fountain House in New York resulted from concerted efforts in early 1940s by some patients of Rockland State Hospital. Their primary objective was to help each other in getting jobs. They realised that this could only be achieved through providing mutual encouragement. They designated

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themselves "WANA" as Acronym of "We Are Not Alone". Gradually the group grew in strength and was joined by some volunteers. Soon they were able to raise funds to buy a four storey Brownstone on West 47th St., New York which had a small Fountain on its premises. The place was turned into a Club House and was named "Fountain House". The programme for day time activities and an evening recreational programme was developed with the help of dedicated professionals.

Fountain House, Lahore, was initially named "Halfway House" but very soon collaborating links were established with Fountain House, New York which resulted in the identity of views on basic concepts. The label of Halfway House could no longer represent the nature of expanding services. It was, therefore, decided to adopt the name Fountain House in 1973. Since then the collaboration between the two Houses has become a unique experiment in cross-cultural collaboration in the field of psychiatric care and rehabilitation. Membership at Fountain House, New York, is open to anyone with a history of psychiatric treatment. At Lahore the members are selected on the basis of a prescribed criterion. One reason for this restriction was the requirement of research. The other more important reason was that being a residential facility, it could not throw its doors wide open. The criteria at present limits membership mainly to Schizophrenics excluding mentally retarded, physically disabled and drug addicts. The membership status is permanent. Access to services in their right as Resident Members, Day Members, Night participants or Casual visitors. Change of status is quite frequent.

PRE-VOCATIONAL DAY PROGRAMME

It has been repeatedly emphasised

that psychiatric patients returning to community have to face extreme difficulties in acquiring jobs. This situation is partly a result of unfavourable opinion held by the employers but part of the reason is lack of self-confidence in the psychiatric patients themselves.

It is essential that such persons are provided with an opportunity to test their own ability to handle responsibilities in pleasant and sympathetic environment. The role of the staff in this programme requires an attitude which tends to eliminate distance between the staff and the members. In short the programme is based on members and staff working together towards the goal of purposeful and meaningful living in the community.

The day time activity of the Club House is divided into a number of Units according to the number of jobs which need to be done for the upkeep and running of the Club House. The most important of these Units are Clerical Unit, Kitchen, Snackbar, Washroom, Gardening and Maintenance. The manpower that could not be absorbed in the activities associated with the maintenance of the House are engaged in other meaningful activities such as Flower Making, Book-binding, Sewing, Handicraft, Plaster of paris modelling etc.

The main objective of all these activities is to prepare the members for taking up jobs of responsibility outside the House by getting used to working with other people.

TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME (T. E. P.)

Even after having gone through the prevocational Day programme in Fountain House, most of the members are apprehensive about going to work outside the sheltered environment of the House. They fear rejection by employers and unsympathetic behaviour by

co-workers. They need further support in handling jobs in the competitive world of business and industry with confidence. The T. E. P. has opened new avenues in this difficult area by enlisting the continued help of employers in Business and Industry in the form of jobs reserved for Fountain House members.

Fountain House, New York has found it possible to make this arrangement with over 150 business firms for the employment of Fountain House members under T. E. P. The impressive result of this experiment have encouraged a number of other rehabilitation centres to adopt T. E. P. programmes in the United States. Fountain House, Lahore, however, has the distinction of being the only rehabilitation centre to adopt this approach outside the United States.

It has taken a good deal of effort and public relationing to convince the business community that the improved mental patients could become useful and productive members of the Society. In the beginning there was a good deal of resistance. The employment situation in Pakistan is very tight and even the able bodied persons with sound mind find it difficult to secure jobs. It was, therefore, advisable to request the employers only for the entry level jobs. The nature of the job is then carefully evaluated by the Social Workers, in some cases by doing the jobs themselves. The working day is then divided into two halves and each member on T. E. P. is expected to work only for half of the day.

The greatest success in this area was achieved by contacting the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry and through them the interested employers. The notable success in this regard has been the placements with Rustam and Sohrab Bicycle Factory which has provided work for a number of Fountain House members. More recently rela-

tionship of this nature has been established with a number of paint shops where the members are used for sorting out various brands and colours. Placement of members in groups has been found to be very satisfactory because of the mutual support by members to each other. Group placement has worked most successfully in nurseries for plants.

In spite of this encouraging breakthrough in a difficult and challenging area, it has not been found possible to arrange jobs for all the members considered suitable for this programme. A plan was, therefore, worked out for the establishment of business enterprises in the community which would be supervised by the Fountain House staff and manned by Fountain House members. These enterprises could include snack-bars and grocery stores. Funds are being provided by the National Institute of Mental Health, U. S. A. for this Project which is expected to be launched during 1983.

The Fountain House programme does not include the training of members in special skills. The experience so far indicates that most of the members come only with academic qualifications but lack useful skills. Typing classes were started as part of the Clerical Unit to help them in finding jobs. The usefulness of this exercise has remained limited because of the high degree of competition in this field. It is now planned to establish a Simulated Workshop either on the premises of the House or as part of a Factory where members will be trained for jobs for which there is a definite market. The Fountain House ideology, however, does not support the concept of sheltered workshops.

THE EVENING AND WEEKEND PROGRAMME

Fountain House, Lahore, in contrast to Fountain House, New York is open

and active nearly twentyfour hours of the day. Evening recreational programme forms an integral part of its activities. There is arrangement for both indoor and out-door games. Regular competitions among members and occasionally against teams from outside the House are organised. Special musical evenings are also arranged in collaboration with students from local colleges and Youth Clubs.

With the acquisition of agricultural land situated at a convenient distance from Lahore, it has become possible to take Fountain House members for weekend visits to the Fountain House Farm at Chuharkana. The Government of Punjab is expected to allot additional 44 acres of agricultural land which will be utilised to start a poultry farm and a Fish Farm. A large number of fruit trees have already been planted on the land in our possession. All these activities will provide opportunities for members from Fountain House, Lahore, to be engaged in projects on the Fountain House Farm.

APARTMENT PROGRAMME

Because of the pressure for admission as residential members, the accommodation has to be continuously enlarged. In spite of its spaciousness, the present building has become over-crowded. Furthermore a large number of present residents of the House have gained sufficient confidence to manage independent living in the community. It is, therefore, planned to start an apartment programme on lines adopted by New York. Funds for this purpose are being provided by National Institute of Handicapped Research, Washington, D. C. These apartments will be used to house some of the current resident members who have either no place to go or their families find it difficult to keep them at home.

They will be run by members under the supervision of Fountain House staff.

REACH OUT PROGRAMMES

Fountain House functions on the concept that the membership of the House is for as long as the member wishes to utilise its services. Contact with all members from Lahore is maintained through periodic follow-up studies. These members are also invited to Social Evenings frequently held in the House. A fairly large number of members have been in touch with the House for psychiatric consultations and to meet their friends. These members are encouraged to keep coming and to persuade other members to do the same.

THE THRIFT SHOP PROGRAMME

So far the products of Fountain House have found their outlet for sale on Social Evenings of an exhibitions arranged by the Social Welfare Department. A Special Show Room has been constructed on the premises for their display. A new shop is being constructed which will be run very much like the Thrift Shop in New York. Efforts are being made to get used articles from the Fountain House patrons for sale through this Shop along with the products of Fountain House Units.

It is planned to run business enterprises and shops in the community as part of a new project to be funded by the National Institute of Handicapped Research, Washington, D. C.

MEDICATION, PSYCHIATRIC CONSULTATION AND HEALTH

Unlike its counterparts in the Western Countries, Fountain House, Lahore, has to provide its members full psychiatric and medical cover. The psychiatric services outside Fountain House are very limited and not easily accessible. Within the house these services are made

available at all times of day and night with the help of two full-time physicians three Consultant Psychiatrists. At the same time every effort is made to preserve the Club House character of the place by avoiding giving active treatment like ECT on the premises. Members are taken to a clinic for this purpose if considered essential. No special ancillary staff is engaged for the distribution of medicines. These duties are performed by members of the staff engaged in other routine functions of the Club House.

Psychological evaluation and social history form an important part of the total record of members during their contact with Fountain House. Efforts are also made to continue to provide supportive psychiatric services to all members who turn to the House for this purpose.

EVALUATION AND CLUBHOUSE ACCOUNTABILITY

The follow-up studies of members provide highly useful data regarding the effectiveness of its services. Three follow-up studies have been conducted so far and another one is planned for this year. In addition to this formal data collection, the members of Fountain House are involved in the running of the House to such an extent that they are expected to comment on its services in frank and personal terms. The House has a Members' Committee with elected office bearers. Furthermore the spirit of leadership is encouraged at all levels so that the House is in a position to organise its activities in accordance with the needs and expectations of the members.

Effort is being made to utilize the categories of Community Adjustment evolved at Fountain House, New York, for the evaluation of the programme at Lahore. However, the experience has shown that some of the categories do not

have the same significance in our socio-cultural context and, therefore, require modifications.

FOUNTAIN HOUSE FARM CHUHARKANA

The nature and organisation of Fountain House programme attracts persons with urban background. As over 70 per cent of population of Pakistan resides in rural areas, it is essential that a rehabilitation programme should be developed to suit the needs of persons coming from agricultural background. The Government of Punjab was approached for the allotment of a piece of agricultural land in the vicinity of Lahore for the establishment of an agricultural farm project. A piece of 25 acres of agricultural land was allotted to Fountain House in 1982 at Chuharkana about 40 kilometer from Lahore. Construction of residential quarters for members was completed in February and the Project was formally inaugurated in March, 1983. The members who live on the Farm are engaged in plantation, growing vegetables crops and other farming activities in addition to the maintenance of the place. It is also planned to add a section of cottage industry to this farm in the near future. Psychiatric consultation and medical services will also be provided for the local population so that the membership from the rural population could be enlarged.

It is envisaged that the simple nature of the agricultural activity will also be helpful as a form of therapy (Agro-therapy) for those members from the urban areas who need to be engaged in healthy outdoor work. This has already been tried on some members and a significant improvement in their physical and mental health was noted.

A Research Project has been planned to determine the effectiveness of Agro-Therapy in the most challenging domain of rehabilitation of chronic schizophrenics.

This is going to be a unique experiment in the field of rehabilitation of mentally ill in a developing country like Pakistan where majority of the population (about 70 per cent) resides in the rural areas.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AS PART OF THERAPY

It is being increasingly realized even in the Western Countries that religious values and practices bring tranquility and stability in the lives of the people. Mentally ill are no exception to this rule. The first effort towards the rehabilitation of the mentally ill in the Western Countries were called "moral education". No modern approach in this area could be called complete and comprehensive without incorporating an element of moral values.

Fountain House, Lahore, has made religious instructions and religious practices an integral part of the daily programme of the House. A mosque has been constructed on the premises which has made it possible for the members to

offer the daily prayers together. The mosque is also being used for group activities such as "Milad" and speech contests on religious topics. Occasionally renowned religious leaders are invited to deliver lectures for the enlightenment of members and the staff. Tapes of recitation from Holy Quran by renowned Qaris are also played at times.

The morning programme of the House after breakfast is started by reading of verses from the Holy Quran. Services of a *Qari* have been acquired for this purpose who spends most of his time with the members to motivate them to offer their prayers regularly and lead a clean moral life. It is felt that participation in religious activities has helped not only in strengthening the mental health of members but it has also kept the atmosphere of the House free from moral and sexual deviations usually associated with living in large groups. Another mosque will soon be built on the premises of Agricultural Farm at Chuharkana.