

EDITORIAL

REHABILITATION IN PSYCHIATRY

Aftercare and rehabilitation services are as important as any other aspect of treatment of major mental disorders. Most centers in developed countries have well organised Aftercare programmes in their community as well as hospital based mental health centers. In India though rehabilitation programmes are offered, they are very few and quite inadequate. That there is a need for developing rehabilitation services is well acknowledged but little is done to achieve the desired services.

At the national level, there is the National Rehabilitation programme under which the District Rehabilitation centers are functioning. However, this is only in a pilot phase currently, and has been launched in six districts. It is surprising to note that the national rehabilitation programme has provisions for services for only mentally retardates and not other mental disorders. The facilities, pensionary and other benefits and compensations which are forwarded to other major physical disorders and mental deficiency are not provided for major mental disorders. Chronic psychotic disorders would be considered to be inadequately managed without Aftercare programmes. The Aftercare programmes would not only help the individual to return back to the society but would also reduce the risk of exacerbations and relapses in his clinical condition. The Rehabilitation programme should begin right from the first time the patient has come into contact with a mental health professional. The common mistake made is that clinicians think about rehabilitation only after the patient has become asymptomatic. Perhaps, early attempts at rehabilitation would benefit the patient and his family in the long run. The rehabilitation programmes should be specifically made for patients who are in the hospital, or these being treated as outpatients or in the community centers. For long term rehabilitation programmes the assistance from social services, voluntary and governmental agencies are very important.

A few centers in India have good rehabilitation programmes with well developed and modernised occupational therapy units, excellent day care facilities and half way homes. Other centers should also develop rehabilitation facilities gradually and improve the final outcome of the mental disorders. No treatment of mental disorder can be considered as complete or adequate without giving due consideration for the rehabilitation or Aftercare services.

S. M. CHANNABASAVANNA