

EDITORIAL**NEW APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MENTAL HEALTH LAW IN GHANA**

Mental illnesses result from a complex interplay of brain circuitry, neurotransmitters, genetics, psychosocial and environmental factors. Stigma based on ignorance continues to be a significant barrier to care in Ghana, as noted by T.A Ulzen in Vol 5 No.2. He further states that the high cost of mental illnesses resulting from prolonged disability, lost productivity and direct and indirect treatment costs should inform strategic plans for the prevention and treatment of psychiatric illnesses. With a psychiatrist to patient ratio of 1:2 million people, it is imperative that all physicians and other healthcare providers be psychiatrically informed, if we are to adequately care for our mentally disabled citizens.

Psychiatric illnesses are significant in at least 50% of primary care visits but these illnesses may not be diagnosed. Untreated, they contribute to poor medical outcomes and suicide. Major psychiatric and substance use disorders are chronic medical illnesses of the brain, and are essentially no different from other chronic illnesses such as diabetes and hypertension.

In this issue, the journal introduces two articles on psychiatry. JJ Lamptey et al write about attention deficit which is a very important disorder. J Clegg-Lamptey et al also write about anxiety and depression as very important associations to be studied in depth in managing our women who are afflicted with breast cancer.

T.P Ulzen's advice on the implementation of the Mental Health Law is that it should be guided by scientific evidence and proven multi-modal treatments, including psychopharmacology and culturally informed psychotherapeutic and community-based inventions. The law should form the basis for inter-disciplinary training in public mental health education and stigma reduction among teachers, nurses, physicians, social workers, judiciary, law enforcement agencies, pastors and others. Modern communications technology which is currently underutilized must be employed in supporting sustainable solutions that offer protection of human rights and the promotion of resiliency and recovery.

JD SEFFAH, Editor-in-Chief.
