

Report on the Mental Health Awareness Program for staff

(Awareness Program – Need for mental health literacy)

Date: 5th November 2019

Venue: Counsel Room

This summary captures an awareness program conducted at counsel room for teaching faculty. Few staff underwent Basic Counselling course, during this occasion course completion certificate were given to them. Peer counselors and other staff members were invited to be part of this program, awareness about the mental health need and the courses offered by the student counselling services were explained to the staff.

The awareness program began with the opening prayer by Rev.Dr. Prasad, Director Peace studies, MCC and continued with Presidential address by Dr. R. W. Alexander Jesudasan, Principal and Secretary, MCC. He elaborated on the rationale for the event, the follow up and distributed certificate to the staff that completed the course. Then, it was handed to the speaker – student counsellor who addressed on Mental Health need among students and teachers.



This awareness program was conducted with the intention to increase the mental health literacy rate among the teaching staff. Principal spoke about the importance of the Basic Counselling Course and acknowledged the need for it. He also encouraged the trained staff to form a system to reach students in their respective department.



Followed by which student counsellor explained the synopsis of the psychological concerns of students, the reason for the distress among the students was explained - the gap that is existing between the onset of the distress and the helping seeking behavior of the students can be shortened if teachers are equipped for early identification and referral. Emphasis on how teachers can bridge the gap and facilitate earliest mental health services was given.

Further, she stressed that with the input of students who have visited Counseling Center at MCC, a sizable percentage of students are found to be in psychological distress indicative of affecting their academics from minimum 4 weeks to maximum 8 months or 1 year prior to accessing professional help. Their level of distress had significantly associated with the number of days they were unable to meet their work and study commitments.

Despite the interference to their capacity to focus on education, students continue to delay or fail to seek help for their problems because of lack of knowledge about the importance of mental health and the stigma to seek help from the counseling services that is provided in the college. In managing the distressing symptoms, students are drawing on past or common coping strategies like drugs, alcohol, unhealthy relationships, social withdrawal, absenteeism, seeking symptomatic somatic treatments and complex inter and intrapersonal issues.

However, if the underlying cause remains unresolved, it may continue to impact students overall functioning and also affect their ability to meet the educational goals. Hence exclusive counseling programs like equipping the faculty and peer counselors on the warning signs of distress, early identification and prevention of psychological distress, creating awareness about the importance of mental health among students and building peer counseling system will bridge the gap between the onset of distress and the helping seeking behavior of students.

There by awareness about existing mental health need was created among the trained and other staff and peer counselors who attended the program.



Outcome:

25 staff members attended the program and as result few of them had volunteered for the forth coming training program (10 weeks) which started in the month of February. Moreover, staff had referred students to counselling services and addressed issues of students at the first level. Most interestingly, teachers have understood that psychological distress among students can be one of the reasons for the student's behavior and not always disrespect or arrogance.

Follow Up:

New batch of Basic counselling course was started in the month February for the new staff who showed the interest and practical session for the trained staff. Furthermore, we wanted to develop a counselling staff representative from each department and under them peer counselors would function.