

Towards evidence-based mental health interventions in Serbia

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Recent body of evidence showed approximately one-third of the population in Serbia can be considered psychologically vulnerable, while every sixth person meets the criteria for at least some of the mental health disorders. These findings underscore the urgent need for the development and implementation of scalable mental health interventions. Nevertheless, numerous obstacles hinder progress toward this objective, such as a slow implementation of mental health reform in Serbia that was supposed to lead towards community-based mental health services that are both available and accessible. Furthermore, the absence of robust data on the effectiveness of these services presents a significant gap, highlighting the necessity of comprehensive research and evaluation.

This lecture will outline a potential roadmap for establishing evidence-based mental health services in Serbia, and present two community based mental health programs that were developed and whose effectiveness was tested and confirmed, highlighting various difficulties in balancing between methodological rigor, ecological validity, and ethics. In addition, numerous barriers, and systemic gaps in scaling up these services across Serbia will be discussed, together with advocacy mechanisms which could be applied in bridging these gaps. The need for both scientific and human rights-based approaches in ensuring proper mental health protection and care will be highlighted.

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