

MEDICAL SOCIAL WORK IN PAKISTAN: A MULTI-MODEL APPROACH TO COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE IN HEALTH CARE SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT

Social work practices aims to increase human happiness in general. It is not simply a matter of charity, but it is a job where a social worker helps clients to solve their problems in order to achieve satisfaction in life. Health and medical problems are not separated from social and psychological aspects because the patient's attitude to his illness plays a vital role in the rehabilitation process. The treatment of social and emotional correlates of physical disease has not yet caught up with the great advances in the field of medicine, although marked progress has been made. Social work is one of many in our society services that contribute to this increase. The branch of social work that is particularly interested in the social and emotional problems of physically ill and performed in a medical setting is called medico-social work.

Keywords: Social Work, Medical Social Work, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Social work is the recent branch of knowledge which deals with the scientific solution and treatment of the psycho-social problems. Its main aim is to increase human happiness in general. Therefore, it is oriented towards the attainment of two ends; first the creation of those conditions which help to make a more satisfying way of life possible, and second, the development within the individual and the community as well as of capacities which help to live that more adequately and very creatively. Social Work in modern context is a professional service-based on scientific knowledge and skills. The main aim of social work is to help people to help themselves. . It is a problem-solving process. It is not merely charity, but it is a profession in which a social worker assists the clients to solve their problems to attain satisfaction in life. In this profession the services are provided objectively and systematically for the well-being of people and societies. Social work is a profession for those with a strong desire to help improve people's lives. Social workers assist people by helping them cope with issues in their everyday lives, deal with their relationships, and solve personal and family problems. Some social workers help clients who face a disability or a life-threatening disease or a social problem, Some social workers conduct research, advocate for improved services, engage in systems design or are involved in planning or policy development. Many social workers specialize in serving a particular population or working in a specific setting. Health and medical problems are not separated from the social as well as psychological aspects because the attitude of the patient towards his illness plays vital role in the rehabilitation process. Medical social worker provide psychosocial support to people, families, or vulnerable populations so they can cope with chronic, acute, or terminal illnesses, such as Alzheimer's disease, cancer, or AIDS. They also advise family caregivers, counsel patients, and help plan for patients' needs after discharge from hospitals

EXPLORING THE TERM “MEDICAL SOCIAL WORK”

The life of today has become very much complicated, calculated, competitive, committed and uncertain particularly in relation to Pakistan, that any gender of this society is facing a tough and real challenge to make his or her life smooth and comfortable. Maximum individuals of Pakistani society are running after the luxuries and basic needs of human life but most of them due to unattainable of desired standards / results, get only frustration, which is certainly creating severe mental and social stress / disorder in the individuals personality and as well in the whole society. The saddest part of this fact is that people are suffering more and more physical and mental diseases but on the other hand the resources required to overcome and address their problems are at the decreasing end, particularly in relation to poor people. But at this very critical situation and point, a man who is known as medical social worker can play a vital and an important role to minimize the miseries of common and particularly poor people, through his positive, active and caring role. Medical social work, as a specialized method of social work, is of recent origin. It involves the practice of social casework, and some-times, group work in a hospital, a clinic, or another medical setting in order to make it possible for the patient to use the available health services most effectively. Medical social work is characterized by emphasis on help in the social and emotional problems which affect the patient in his illness and his cure.

In short While the treatment of social and emotional concomitants of physical illness has not yet caught up with the great strides in the field of medicine, although marked advances have been made. Social work is one of many services in our society which are contributing to this advance. That branch of social work which is especially interested in social and emotional problems of physically ill and carried on in a medical setting is called medical social work.

Definition of Medical Social Work

It is evident from the above description that the study of psycho-social aspect is essential for the treatment of a patient. The role played by the professional social worker in the field of medical is known as Medical Social Work. Some selected definitions are mentioned below for the better understanding of the term “Medical Social Work”

According to Dr, COBAT:

“Medical Social Work is a process which serves to assist the physician in diagnosis and treatment of patient through study of the patient in his social situation and by interpreting the patient and his environment to the physician. In addition the medical social work is to assist by organized sources in making medical treatment more effective”

According to Dr, MAIJOR:

“Case work or medical social work in the hospitals is for ensuring healthy condition in his or her home in preparation for the patient’s return at home”

OUR AIM

To carry out the study of medical social worker, who is playing an active and an important role in the society, while treating the patients from social / psychological point of view and providing them maximum help in maintaining the health.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Like the other types of social work modern social work is rooted deeply in the past. Although the formal professional organizations dates back only a few decades, its foundation rest on

achievements which are much older. The development of medical social work is based on four main sources. The first was the recognition in England, in the 1880's, that discharged patients of mental hospitals needed "after-care" in their homes in order to avoid recurrence of their illness. "Visitors" went to the patient's home and advised family and friends about the necessary care of the patient after his discharge. A second source of medical social work were the "lady almoners" in English hospitals; they organized, upon the initiative of Sir Charles S. Loch in London, in the 1890's, and served as volunteer receptionists, made social investigations, and decided whether the applicant should be admitted as a free patient to the hospital, and what charity organization might be asked to assume the patient's support. Visiting nurses were the third source of medical social workers.

In 1883, Lillian Wald and Mary Brewster of the Henry Street Settlement House in New York began to visit the homes of sick people in the neighborhood who were too poor to pay for medical and nursing care. They found many social and personal problems which were caused by the illness of the patients. Some hospitals in New York learned from the experiences of the Henry Street Settlement House that visits in the home might greatly improve the effect of medical treatment; House that visits in the home might greatly improve the effect of medical treatment; they sent nurses from the hospital staff for "after-care" and supervision of discharged patients. The fourth source of medical social work was medical students trained in social agencies. Dr, Charles P. Emerson of Johns Hopkins University at Baltimore, in 1902, wanted to include the study of social and emotional problems into medical education and requested that his students serve as volunteers with charity agencies in order to gain an understanding of the influence of social, economic, and living conditions on the illness of patients. On the basis of these experiences, medical social work was established in 1905.

As far as development of Medical Social Work in Pakistan is concerned critically evaluation results that in the early days when the Government of Pakistan was enormous responsibility of developing resources for a new nation, recognition was given to the importance of social welfare including Medical Social Work. After the independence just within the 6 years the new born Government started its social welfare programmes including training for medical social work in guidance of United Nation's experts having the expertise in the field of social services.

JUSTIFYING THE WHY?

There was a time when there was a very close, intimate and informal relationship between the physician and the community he practiced in and the people he attended. He was not only a physician to the patient. He was also a friend, a guide, a healer and helper to them. He shared the joys and sorrows of the people he served. But now days the profession of medicine has become very much commercial and formal. With the development of the knowledge and skills of medical service, there has been a tendency to specialize in various services in hospital and clinics. Doctors and nurses in the hospital are found to be concerned with certain particular aspect of patient's life. They are manly concerned with providing medical care to the patients. They do not bother very little for the social and emotional problems of the patients nor do they investigate weather the medical services rendered by them are being properly utilized by the patients. This call for the services of professional social worker in hospitals and clinics who can deal with the social and emotional needs of the patients and can help them to make best use of medical care provided by the hospital staff.

IMPORTANCE OF MEDICAL SOCIAL WORK

As we believed that health and medical problems are not separated from the psychological aspects because the attitude of the patient towards his illness play vital role for the

rehabilitation process. Medical social work is based upon well defined principles of social work. Its objective is to help patient in developing an understanding of his needs and to motivate him to use his capacities towards satisfactory solution of his own problems, using the strength within his personality and if necessary, facilitates and resources provided by the community.

The help which a sick person requires depends upon a number of factors like social setting, the resources available and the nature of readjustment or rehabilitation needed for him after recovery from illness. A medical social worker, on the other hand, is interested in personality of the patient and also interested in factors in his social environment which affect his illness and rehabilitation process. A medical social worker, therefore, attempts to understand the needs and circumstances of patient with view to finding out their impacts on his illness. Through this understanding and through the application of social case work principles and techniques, he aims to help the patient utilizing patients full capacity and empowering him to accept the illness as reality and try to overcome it on self help basis.

Medical social work is concerned not only with the curative measure but also with preventive measures. It seeks to help the patient in his rehabilitation so that he may be saved from undesirable situation like relapse of diseases, breakdown of family relationships, and economic strain in the family and loss in the value of life. Providing convalescent care is another important aspect of medical social work.

PROGRESS IN PAKISTAN

Usually, specific government planning for social welfare and social service emerges at a much later stage, often as a result of demonstration given by voluntary groups of the extent of social need requiring the attention of government. .But in Pakistan this recognition of the responsibility of the government for social welfare and social services development comes too early in the history of a country. Medical social work is one of the oldest social services in Pakistan but in Pakistan it is still in its infancy. A number of hospitals and organizations are engaging medical social work and the medical profession and the general public have began to express appreciation for their services. Almost all university departments of social work are offering training in medical social work.

In was in 1953 that a training programme in medical social work was introduced in Karachi. At present there are no separate arrangements of training for medical social workers. They are trained in the university departments of social work. At first, this new service was under the control of the “National Council of Social Welfare”. There are about 90 medical social worker units in Punjab, 29 Sindh, 4 in Baluchistan and 4 in N.W.F.P.

A medial social worker though appointed and controlled by the Directorate of social welfare, works in an agency setting whose staff, administration and policy are warm relationship with the physician is also very necessary for avoiding the possibility of misunderstanding about each other role. Ideally the physician to medical social worker who in consultation with the patient and the physician helps the patient overcomes his psycho-social problems so that can use effectively the medical treatment offered in the hospital. The medical social worker is not merely a person for distribution of relief material, or to find out the material resources for the patient from outside or to arrange for the sending of the patient to home from the hospital after discharge. His role is really much more and is concerned with the rough job of creating and using the professional relationship, co-operation and understanding in a hospital where the physician is likely to consider him as a non-technical person means for relief work and the patient may take him for a doctor under such circumstances, his role becomes very delicate.

ROLE OF MEDICAL SOCIAL WORKER

1. A medical social worker is the one who is interested in the personality of patient and in factors in his social environment which affects his illness and rehabilitation. A medical social worker therefore attempts to understand the needs and circumstances of patient with the view to finding out their impact on illness.
2. The medical social worker through interview with patient and with his family friends and neighbors tries to get a clear picture of patient and his psychosocial environment in order to assess, in consultation with patient and (attending) physicians, the nature and extent of help patient require for his cure and rehabilitation.
3. Respect for an individual and his right of self-determination are accepted principles of social work but due to physical incapacity or high emotional tension, the medical social worker often takes the initiative in deciding about the help and care needed by patient for his care and rehabilitation.
4. Medical, emotional, physical and psychological processes of a patient. Therefore the role of medical social worker is to supervise the arrangements made for the treatment of patients and also take proper steps for their rehabilitation and social adjustment.

FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL WORKER IN MEDICAL SETTING

As the medical social work profession grew it branched out from hospital practice to work in other agencies and organizations. It is now practiced as in public health and medical care centers. Following are the various ways to which the medical social work can help the patients:

As the Liaison

When any patient happen to be in the hospitals for treatment for the 1st time, it is very likely that he feels quite insecure and worry isolated. He finds there unfamiliar surroundings, unaccustomed routines, strange faces and hard restrictions imposed by the hospital authority. He may develop enormous fears and anxieties about new faces and new environment there which may adversely affect the cure of the patient.

In such case the medical social worker can't act as a liaison between the patient and the hospital staff and may establish good relationship between them. He may remove the anxieties and fears of the patient about the hospital life, diet, disease, treatment, visiting hour and restrictions.

Arrange the Medicines for the Patients

In many cases costly drugs, medicines and diets may be prescribed for patients and are too poor to achieve (procure) them. Here the medical social worker arranges this material for the patients by some social agency or any other source.

As A Motivator

Some patients may be required to undergo some operation on some parts of his body. But he may not be willing to undergo it. In such case the medical social worker can play an important role by explaining the nature of the disease to him also by explaining the importance of this treatment in his life.

Provision of Background History

In many cases the treatment of the disease of the patients requires past history and family background of the patient. In this situation medical social worker can contribute a lot and this is not the job of a doctor.

Provision of Financial Aid to Dependent

It may be the case that the only bread earner of family happens to be hospitalized for prolonged treatment. In such case it is very natural then he always worried about his dependents. This mental anxiety acts adversely on his early recovery. In such situations the medical social worker can do a lot of in removing his mental worries by giving the patient regular information about his dependents and arranging visits for them in the hospital. He may also provide financial help to them either from social agencies or by persuading employs.

Medical Social Work Arranges Job through Training

There may be patients who are victim of some accident and may fail to get back their previous job or any new job after release from the hospital. The medical social worker can help them to be self-supporting by arranging vocational training for them.

Medical Social Work Is Source of Early Recovery

By providing recreational programmers and facilities the medical social worker can divert the attention of the patient from illness and contribute much in early recovery.

Personal Interaction

On 7th December 12, We visited the office of Medical Social Services Project (MSSP) in Sargodha at District Health Quarters and during our discussion and sitting with medical social officer, we found him a person who is well aware of his duties and is performing his duties in a extremely professional manners. It was really a pleasant surprise for us at least, because to manage the affairs related to his appointment with such meager resources, is really a tough job and which demands complete dedication and motivation to serve the poor and needy patients:-

General Data of District Headquarters

The bed capacity of Sargodha District Headquarters is 447. District Head Quarters is the oldest health care delivery institution and now also giving opportunity to medical students to learn.

Medical Social Services Project was established in 1968 under the Government of Punjab. The funding which medical social officer is receiving against these patients from Zakat Fund annually is almost Rs. 3200000. Further allotment of this funding is that Rs. 1000 is allotted for the outdoor patients and Rs. 2000 is allotted for the indoor patients. But the most unfortunate part of this funding is that for the last almost two years, this funding has been stopped due to some reasons and that is why, the poor and needy patients are suffering more and more.

Organizational Structure of MSSP at DHQ

Medical social officer (17 grade)	:	1
Clerk	:	1
Naib Qasid	:	1

Source of Funding to Medical Social Officer

There are basically three ways through which medical social officer is getting the funding resources for needy patients and those are mentioned as below:-

- I. From Zakat Fund (for poor and need patients).

- II. From Baitul-Mall (for non Muslims, Sadat and Hepatitis C patients).
- III. Non Government Organizations (Blood donation, Dylicis & help needy patients).

Objectives of Medical Social Services Project DHQ

The project aimed at providing voluntary services in the fields of health. Mentioned below are the detailed objectives of Medical Social Services Project.

- a. To prepare of case studies.
- b. To rehabilitate the patients.
- c. To provide medicines of Zakat Fund to the poor and needy patients from the secretarial of Health welfare society.
- d. To organize patient welfare society with collaboration of society
- e. To create skills amongst people of society for their better social functioning.
- f. To assessments of needs of patients and to facilitate them.
- g. During heavy type of emergency campaign MSO, Coordinate with hospital administration.
- h. To deliver free medicines of about 2000 rupees to the indoor patients and free medicines of about 1000 rupees to outdoor patients.
- i. Indoor patients are issued medicines on daily basis.
- j. Outdoor patients are issued for five days.

Procedure of Getting Free Medicine at DHQ

Medical Social Officer informed the detailed procedure for patient to take free medicine.

- I. First of all a form to get medicines from zakat fund is being provided namely "Istaqhak Form", to the needy patients by Medical Social Services project.
- II. The patient has to submit this form after the attesting to from the chairman of local zakat committee.
- III. After the submission of this form, the patients are issued a card to get the medicines from zakat fund.
- IV. The patients are issued Annex IV forms which are provided by the Punjab Zakat department to the Medical Social welfare department.
- V. The patient again submits this Form in M.S.O. With the signature of concerned doctor and name of medicines.
- VI. Medical social officer enter this form with patients bio-data, the name of medicines of patients into outdoor/indoor, register and enter this no: of entry to the Annex IV form.
- VII. After the signature of M.S.O., all the forms are sent to the medial superintendent who is also the convener of health welfare committee. He checks the medicines and signs the forms.
- VIII. Again forms are sent to the M.S.O., where the signatures of patients are taken to deliver medicines to them and medicines are being issued.
- IX. Patient after receiving medicines form the mentioned medical social office where again medicines are being checked to see either they are according to the form or not.
- X. Indoor patents are provided free medicines of 2000/- rupees and outdoor patinas are provided free medicines of 100 rupees.

In Cooperated NGO's with Medical Social Officer

Alrifia Blood Donation Society

Provide blood to the needy patients. This NGO has his own set up and blood bank in District Headquarters.

Rahber Welfare Society

Working for drug addicted persons and persons having HIV positive.

Patients Welfare Society

Working for patient's welfare.

Welfare Society of Humanity

Working for those poor patients who required dylices. In District Headquarters' this set up, this organization has almost eight functioning machines.

Seeking of Information about the poor Patients.

There are three different ways by which poor patients approach the medical social officer to get the help and these are as following:-

- I. Doctors, nurses, para medical staff refer the needy patients to the Medical Social Officer.
- II. Through personal visit to indoor patients.

CHALLENGES

As medical social workers often have large case-loads and have to meet tight deadlines to arrange for necessary services, medical social work is a highly demanding job and as a result the turnover rate is high. In addition, medical social worker often confront highly complex cases involving patients with multiple psycho-social issues, all of which requiring intervention and leading to delays in discharge. For instance, in a major urban acute care medical center, it is not uncommon for the medical social worker to assess patients who are simultaneously homeless, without health insurance coverage, have multiple chronic medical and psychiatric conditions, are unemployed, and have substance abuse problems. Any of these, separately and together, can impede timely discharge. This is why a complete and timely assessment of the patient's psychosocial needs is critical.

CONCLUSION

Medical social work is a very powerful and essential branch of Social Work for delivering a comprehensive and qualitative health care to society. It needs boosting up and revitalization, particularly among the medical students, doctors and health planners. There are numerous factors affecting the health of a community, one deserve special attention here-that is emotional as well as psychological health. Although the medical social services are the oldest but the services are still in infancy and not attained its maturity level in Pakistan. There are various limitations to a such as, lack of funds, unclear vision of Medical Social Officer on the part of patients as well as physicians, Centralized decision-making and Lack of functional clarity which leads to the failure. Research must be guided to this one urgently if health services are to be given a proper chance to succeed.

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