

Current Health Event

First national mental health and substance use strategy

The MoPH, WHO, UNICEF and IMC launched the first mental health and substance use strategy for Lebanon. The aim of the strategy is to ensure high quality preventive measures and mental health care for all populations in Lebanon.

Editorial note:

Mental and substance use disorders are one of the top public health concerns, globally and locally.

Internationally, mental disorders constitute 7.4% of the total disease burden. According to latest national evidence 4.6% of the population experienced a severe mental disorder and 10.5% experienced more than one disorder at some point in their lives. Depression, with 9.9%, is the most prevalent condition. Anxiety disorders are found in 16.7% while mood disorders in 12.6% of the population.

Data from the Global School Health Survey (GSHS) show that 5% of Lebanese students ever used illicit drugs, half of them did before the age of 10 years.

Mental and substance use disorders are strongly correlated with suicide; 4.3% of the Lebanese population experienced suicidal ideation and 2% attempted suicide. Data from the GSHS are alarming: 15.2% of the students had suicidal ideations, 11.6% of them made suicidal plans and 13.8% actually attempted suicide one or more times in the last year.

Figure: Domains and goals of the mental health strategy

Domain	Goal
Domain 1 Leadership and governance	Strengthen effective leadership and governance for mental health.
Domain 2 Reorientation and scaling up of mental health services	Provide comprehensive, integrated and responsive mental health and social care services in community-based settings.
Domain 3 Promotion and prevention	Develop and implement key promotion and prevention strategies for mental health and substance use.
Domain 4 Information, evidence and research	Obtain evidence-based knowledge to inform mental health planning and service development through an operational Health Information System (HIS) and coordinated national research practice.
Domain 5 Vulnerable groups	Improve access to equitable evidence-based mental health services –preventive and curative– for all persons in the vulnerable groups living in Lebanon.

The high prevalence of mental and substance use disorders, the early age of onset and long delays in seeking treatment have exacerbated the burden of mental disorders. More than ever, addressing mental health issues has become a pressing need.

The national strategy addresses mental and substance use disorders through a cost-effective, evidence-based and multidisciplinary approach with an emphasis on community involvement, continuum of care, human rights, and cultural relevance.

The goals and domains of action of the strategy are in line with the WHO Global Action Plan for Mental Health (2013-2020).

The strategy is the result of a participatory exercise involving all actors in the field of mental health and substance use in Lebanon as well as international experts. For more info on the strategy contact: mh.moph@gmail.com

Cumulative Notifiable diseases in Lebanon (Syrian)				
Disease	2014	2015 Cumul*	May	Jun
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0(0)	0	0(0)	0(0)
Acute Flaccid Paralysis	53(16)	46(5)	10(1)	6(0)
Measles	235(107)	22(5)	3(2)	3(0)
Mumps	736(117)	971(193)	155(24)	40(8)
Pertussis	87(25)	22(5)	6(1)	1(0)
Rabies	1(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Rubella	18(12)	6(1)	0(0)	1(1)
Tetanus	0(0)	1(0)	1(0)	0(0)
Viral Hep B	218(33)	114(18)	13(1)	9(2)
Water/Food Borne Diseases				
Brucellosis	252(36)	102(24)	32(4)	8(2)
Cholera	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Hydatid cyst	16(2)	12(1)	2(0)	1(0)
Typhoid Fever	546(33)	182(17)	34(1)	11(0)
Viral Hep A	2582(911)	527(112)	34(6)	8(1)
Other Diseases				
Leishmaniasis	663(638)	23(15)	0(0)	1(1)
Meningitis	232(35)	175(35)	33(4)	20(4)
Viral Hep C	100(6)	56(3)	10(0)	4(1)

Source: Ministry of Public Health as of 26 June 2015