WHO launches new guidelines on managing physical health amid mental health issues

The World Health Organization (WHO) has released guidelines to assist in managing physical health concerns among adults diagnosed with severe mental disorders. People living with severe mental disorders—including depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia among others—have a general life expectancy of between ten and twenty years shorter than average. A significant proportion of these deaths are a result of physical conditions. For many such people, quality health care to address their physical ailments is difficult to access, or their physical health concerns are overlooked.
WHO’s evidence-based guidelines include recommendations for treating cardiovascular disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, hepatitis B and C, and tobacco and substance dependence for patients suffering from mental disorders. Health care workers at all levels would benefit from the guidelines, as would policy makers, health care planners, mental health program developers, patients, and their families. Read the full story (https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/guidelines_severe_mental_disorders_web_note_2018/en/).

Public libraries support health with new “Wellbeing Bags”

Public libraries in the United Kingdom are offering loans of bags filled with resources to boost wellbeing to anyone who possesses a library card. Library staff pitched the idea of “Wellbeing Bags” to a panel of county councilors and officials who were seeking creative new ideas to improve library service. The bags—which contain self-help books, coloring books, recipes, puzzles, relaxation music, and health information—have the potential to enhance the health of individuals, groups, and communities in both private and public settings.

“Libraries have an important role to play in promoting the health and wellbeing of all our residents and we are very pleased to be able to launch this innovative and worthwhile project,” said County Councillor Greg White, executive member for libraries. Read the full story (https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/news/article/libraries-offer-bags-wellbeing).

Canada digitizes the patient experience

Canada Health Infoway has launched a new campaign, Access 2022, which will encourage more modern provision of digital health information, encourage access to health care providers through automated systems, and integrate with the existing automated prescription service, PrescribelT (https://www.prescribeit.ca/).

“Provinces have the information and systems in place. Physicians have the electronic records. The next part is making it visible to the Canadian population,” said Michael Green, president and chief executive officer of Canada Health Infoway. “There’s even potential to attend an appointment over Facetime instead of doing a face-to-face visit and plan resources more effectively.”

The initiative is expected to reduce unnecessary office visits and misreading of written prescriptions by pharmacists. It will also allow online appointment bookings and virtual mental health services. Read the full story (https://www.itworldcanada.com/article/canada-health-infoway-launches-campaign-to-connect-canadians-with-digital-health-records/411781).

Global health care research enhances US medical education

Students at Cornell University are expanding their views of health care by conversing with their peers around the world. As part of their course requirements, each student must visit the Cornell Portal, an audiovisual room outside the library, to connect with other portals and interact with other students in real time. Through the portal, students learn firsthand about other cultures and their health care practices, and they learn to navigate communicating with people from those cultures, which is an important skill to possess when treating patients. In the course, they also learn about the ethics of institutions, society, and governments.

One student in Gaza City spoke of the lack of necessary equipment and drugs for patient care, and the difficulties that patients experience when seeking permission to travel to hospitals. A number of students shared their successes at winning scholarships to study in America, but they were unable to travel due to lack of permissions.

“They have completely different circumstances and that really shocked me,” said one US student. Read the full story (http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2018/10/students-use-library-portal-talk-global-health-care).

Canadian city helps rebuild lost library in Iraq
The small Canadian city of Charlottetown, PEI, is helping to rebuild a library in Baghdad through art. The library, which was located at the University of Baghdad, was destroyed as a result of war. The library lost 70,000 books. The exhibit, created by university alumnus Wafaa Bilal, has been on tour since 2016. “It's an art exhibition and installation about art, politics and public participation,” said visual arts educator Kate Sharpley.

The exhibit consists of shelves packed with plain white books containing blank pages. For the duration of the display, visitors can buy books from a wish list provided by the University of Baghdad or contribute cash donations. As books are purchased, they will replace the blank books on the shelves so that the display will evolve and become more colorful and visually appealing. The goal is to replace all of the blank books with academic books by the end of the exhibit. Read the full story (https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-confederation-centre-art-gallery-wafaa-bilal-1.4939592).