



# Improving Mental Health Care

THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE

EDITED BY

Graham Thornicroft,  
Mirella Ruggeri and  
David Goldberg



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# Dedication



This book is appearing at the time Michele Tansella is due to retire. His colleagues both in Italy and elsewhere have marked the occasion by considering the enormous contribution he has made to mental health services in community settings. He has made the services in South Verona known to mental health professionals across the world and has been immensely influential in influencing the development of community care internationally.

The volume that has resulted has aimed to provide clear guidance on how mental health services can be provided in both high- and low-income countries, bearing in mind both the manpower and resource available in each. It is still sadly the case that most beds for patients with mental disorders are situated in mental hospitals in low-income countries: this book describes the way in which services can progress beyond this, so that community-based services can be developed. The book describes these developments and emphasises the important part that primary care services must provide in all countries, regardless of their income, in providing mental health services that are truly comprehensive.

New services need new research methods and new planning decisions. These topics are fully covered and there are also two chapters (Chapters 3 and 24) on the good and bad points in community services that have developed in high-income countries. New services need to take account of conditions that exist in

any particular country, but wherever they are developed services need to be readily accessible and provided in environments which are non-institutional.

Michele Tansella arrived in Verona from the Istituto Mario Negri in Milano in 1969, then soon left to spend six months at the Institute of Psychiatry in London. At that time, he had little to learn about community mental health services at the Maudsley Hospital but a great deal to learn about epidemiology and the systematic collection and analysis of data. He also widened his circle of professional colleagues and has brought many of the authors of the present chapters to visit the Verona service and publish comparative studies. During an earlier visit to the Institute, he met his wife Christa, who has assisted him at every stage in building up a united and happy Department, publishing many joint papers [1, 2]. Michele returned to Verona in early 1970 and collaborated with the team charged with the responsibility of setting up new mental health services in South Verona.

Michele quickly made his mark, insisting from the start on the meticulous collection of data about every aspect of the developing service [3]. In those early years, he advocated the changes introduced to Italian psychiatry by Law 180 which eventually prevented new admissions to mental hospitals, in favour of services offered in less formal community settings [4, 5]. The first formal description of the South Verona service in a high-impact journal was published in 1985 [6], followed by the first description of the all-important case register [7] dealing with the epidemiology of schizophrenia in a community setting. Since that time, he has published many informative accounts of the local services [8].

Over the next few years Michele trained many future Italian academic psychiatrists, building up a formidable team of psychiatric researchers. Since these early years, he has published 286 papers in international peer-reviewed journals, as well as numerous books and chapters. A most important development was his book with Graham Thornicroft called *The Mental Health Matrix*, which sets out a detailed plan for providing mental health services to a community. The book was translated into four languages [9] and more recently brought up to date [10] in *Better Mental Health Care* (now translated into eight languages).

Since 1992, Michele has edited *Epidemiologia e Psichiatria Sociale* (now retitled *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*), which has been important in providing Italian psychiatrists with a forum for exchanging views and data. The journal has continuously increased its international reputation; in 2011, it was ranked 22nd of the 117 Journals quoted by the *Journal Citation Reports* within the category 'Psychiatry'. Since 1997, Michele has edited *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* and is a member of the board of several international journals. Between 2006 and September 2012, he served two consecutive terms as Dean of the University of Verona's medical school.

Under Michele's leadership, Verona was designated by the World Health Organization as "Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Mental Health" on February 1987, confirmed in 2001, 2005, 2009 and still active. By



2005, his team of 23 tenured staff had produced 2000 citations in high-impact journals, and this figure climbed to 12 400 in 2011. In that year, there were 58 papers published by the team, including high-impact journals such as *Lancet*, *BMJ*, *American Journal of Psychiatry* and *Biological Psychiatry*.

These bare facts give little impression of the man. Michele is warm, witty and excellent company. He is fiercely proud of what has been achieved in South Verona and has been a major influence on the development of services for people with mental illness across the world.

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# Contents

Contributors, xii

## **Section 1 The global challenge, 1**

- 1 The nature and scale of the global mental health challenge, 3  
*Mirella Ruggeri, Graham Thornicroft and David Goldberg*
- 2 Scaling up mental health care in resource-poor settings, 12  
*Shekhar Saxena, Benedetto Saraceno and Justin Granstein*
- 3 The swings and roundabouts of community mental health:  
The UK fairground, 25  
*Peter Tyrer*
- 4 Mental health services and recovery, 40  
*Mike Slade, Mary Leamy, Victoria Bird and Clair Le Boutillier*

## **Section 2 Meeting the global challenge, 57**

- 5 Implementing evidence-based treatments in routine mental  
health services: Strategies, obstacles, new developments  
to better target care provided, 59  
*Antonio Lasalvia, Sarah Tosato, Katia De Santi, Doriana Cristofalo,  
Chiara Bonetto and Mirella Ruggeri*
- 6 The need for new models of care for people with severe mental illness  
in low- and middle-income countries, 78  
*Ruben Alvarado, Alberto Minoletti, Elie Valencia, Graciela Rojas and Ezra Susser*
- 7 The role of primary care in low- and middle-income countries, 96  
*David Goldberg, Graham Thornicroft and Nadja van Ginneken*
- 8 Meeting the challenge of physical comorbidity and unhealthy  
lifestyles, 114  
*Lorenzo Burti, Loretta Berti, Elena Bonfioli and Irene Fiorini*
- 9 Complex interventions in mental health services research:  
Potential, limitations and challenges, 131  
*Thomas Becker and Bernd Puschner*

- 10 The feasibility of applying the clinical staging paradigm to the care of people with mental disorders, 145  
*Javier Vázquez-Bourgon, Luis Salvador-Carulla, Benedicto Crespo-Facorro and José Luis Vázquez-Barquero*
- 11 Work, mental health and depression, 163  
*Aart Schene, Hiske Hees, Maarten Koeter and Gabe de Vries*
- 12 Training mental health providers in better communication with their patients, 180  
*Christa Zimmermann, Lidia Del Piccolo, Claudia Goss, Giuseppe Deledda, Mariangela Mazzi and Michela Rimondini*
- 13 Making an economic case for better mental health services, 193  
*Martin Knapp*

### **Section 3 New research methods, 209**

- 14 Incorporating local information and prior expert knowledge to evidence-informed mental health system research, 211  
*Luis Salvador-Carulla, Carlos Garcia-Alonso, Karina Gibert and Javier Vázquez-Bourgon*
- 15 Innovative epidemiological methods, 229  
*Francesco Amadeo, Valeria Donisi, Laura Grigoletti and Alberto Rossi*
- 16 Routine outcome monitoring: A tool to improve the quality of mental health care?, 246  
*Sjoerd Sytema and Lian van der Krieke*
- 17 Psychiatric case registers: Their use in the era of global mental health, 264  
*Povl Munk-Jørgensen and Niels Okkels*
- 18 Can brain imaging address psychosocial functioning and outcome in schizophrenia?, 281  
*Marcella Bellani, Nicola Dusi and Paolo Brambilla*
- 19 Statistics and the evaluation of the effects of randomised health-care interventions, 291  
*Graham Dunn*
- 20 Service user involvement in mental health research, 308  
*Diana Rose*

### **Section 4 Delivering better care in the community, 317**

- 21 Psychotropic drug epidemiology and systematic reviews of randomised clinical trials: The roads travelled, the roads ahead, 319  
*Andrea Cipriani, Michela Nosè and Corrado Barbui*

- 22 Services for people with severe mental disorders in high-income countries: From efficacy to effectiveness, 340  
*Paul Bebbington, Elizabeth Kuipers and David Fowler*
- 23 The management of mental disorders in the primary care setting, 374  
*Matteo Balestrieri*
- 24 Some wobbly planks in the platform of mental health care, 394  
*Norman Sartorius*
- 25 Treatment gaps and knowledge gaps in mental health: Schizophrenia as a global challenge, 403  
*Assen Jablensky*
- Index, 424

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