Nou Bezwen Anpil Chita: Exploring Mental Health in Rural Haiti

Project Objectives
1. Measure the population prevalence of functional impairment, local idioms of distress, anxiety, depression, and suicide in Haiti’s Central Plateau using locally-adapted mental health instruments.
2. Develop and pilot test culturally appropriate mental health curriculum for community health workers/promoteurs and dynamic community members.
3. Examine laws, norms, and protections in place concerning people with mental health disorders, as well as the existing programs and structures for carrying these out.
4. Explore attitudes and perceptions towards suicide amongst the general population and health care providers using qualitative interview techniques.
5. Ensure suicidal cases identified through epidemiological survey are linked to appropriate care.

Findings
Marc is 76. He is unable to walk. His vision is cloudy due to longstanding cataracts. He has one son who left for the Dominican Republic a year ago and he has not heard anything from him. He is hungry. He has no money. He relies on neighbors to bring food to him. He thinks of killing himself. The only reason he does not is because custom dictates that when you die everyone comes and visits your house, and he is embarrassed for others to see how he lives.

Provider: “I have worked here since 2002. I know all the zones. There are 58 locations in the section. In these 58 locations I have never heard this [suicide]. I heard of someone dying from lightning (laughing). Only.”

Community member: “so the oil that they had before, its not for people, it was to put on tobacco to kill insects. The people that bought it saw what the oil can do, so they drank it themselves. Many people killed themselves. But the [village] chief stopped it, you can’t buy it. There is another brand of oil that can’t kill you. its not permitted anymore to buy the worse one.”

One interviewee described the term “maladi kikilisyayon” by saying “You sit down and you think about it. You cannot turn left and you cannot turn right. You try to sleep and you think about it. You cannot do it. If this arrives for a long time you become discouraged. As it keeps going on other problems can happen.” Since the term ‘sante mental’ (mental health) does not have the same significance in rural Haiti as it does in a Western setting, it was beneficial to have a common term to refer to throughout the project.

Table 1: Multivariable logistic regression model for 405 individuals completing household survey in rural Haiti using expressing suicidal ideation on Beck Depression Inventory as binary outcome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariates</th>
<th>aOR (95% CI)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.1 (1.1, 1.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female gender</td>
<td>1.5 (0.53, 4.2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beck Depression Inventory score (10 point change)</td>
<td>2.6 (1.8, 3.7)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have someone to care for you if sick</td>
<td>0.19 (0.038, 0.98)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use alcohol</td>
<td>4.4 (1.6, 12.5)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ever been to a vodou priest</td>
<td>3.4 (1.1, 10.5)*</td>
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*P < .05 (Wald X²)
† P < .0001 (Wald X²)

Note: Variables considered for inclusion: marital status, education, religion, time to work, water, doctor, number in household, SES, affected by earthquake, someone in household suffering mental illness, number of children, stress variables, care variables, last time sick went to hospital, type of work, months with not enough food, blaming those with mental illness.

Location
- Project was based in the town of Casse, near Thomonde, Haiti, which is in Haiti’s Central Plateau.
- Epidemiologic survey covered the region of La Hoye.

Progress to Date / Next Steps
Three papers in preparation for submission winter 2011:
- Field training for calculation sickness: Evidence for an apprenticeship model - McLean
- Attitudes and perceptions towards suicide in rural Haiti – Hagaman
- Depression, suicide, and associated Factors in rural Haiti – Wagenaar

Paper in preparation for submission spring 2012:
- Divergence of norms and legal framework for mental health in rural Haiti – Pope
- Continued partnership with PIH and Olissant, Hubert, Charte to ensure functioning of referral system
- Use findings from epidemiologic study & qualitative analysis to inform future program and intervention planning