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Exploring the effectiveness of community-driven strategies in promoting mental well-being in Othaya, Nyeri South Sub-County in Nyeri County.

Background

In 2024, the Amref Health Africa THRIVE project, in collaboration with the Nyeri County Department of Medical Services and Public Health, began implementing the Othaya Primary Care Network (PCN) with a strong focus on community engagement. Through dialogues, household visits, and outreach programs, communities voiced a clear need for accessible mental health services and stronger linkages to health facilities.

Methodology

In response, mental health clinics were launched in four wards in October 2024 with support from the Sub-County Health Management Team. Previously, data from local facilities showed high patient default rates, frequent relapses, and suicides. Since the clinics' introduction, more patients have sought care, indicating a growing trust in the services.

However, the clinics face serious challenges—chiefly the irregular supply of psychotropic medication. These gaps have led to relapses, suicidal ideations, and preventable deaths. Addressing supply chain issues is critical for sustaining the positive impact of mental health services.

Result

A retrospective study (October 2024–June 2025) reviewed clinic records, patient demographics, and outcomes. Qualitative interviews with caregivers highlighted barriers, particularly medication shortages and limited knowledge among caregivers and providers. Of 120 patients, 76.6% attended follow-ups regularly, 15% relapsed, 4.1% died by suicide, and 14.1% were lost to follow-up. Most patients were female, aged 11–60, with diagnoses including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, epilepsy, anxiety, depression, and substance use disorders.

Conclusion

The findings underscore the need for consistent medication supply, integration of mental health into primary care, stigma reduction, and the development of peer support networks. Further research is essential to guide evidence-based policies, optimize resource use, and expand community-based mental health models that promote lasting recovery and well-being.

Primary author: Ms NYAGA, Priscilla (Amref Health Africa)

Presenter: Ms NYAGA, Priscilla (Amref Health Africa)

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