

# Introduction – Mental Health and the Justice System

Ruby Brown and Anne Wojtak

“When it comes to mental health all countries can be thought of as developing countries” (Patel et al. 2018). This perspective is even more pronounced in the critical junction of serious mental health disorders and the criminal justice system. As our understanding and tolerance of the human condition evolves, it sheds light on the critical gaps in the health system for this at-most-risk population.

Health leaders and committed practitioners are actively pursuing the knowledge required to navigate the complexities of behaviours influenced by a mental health condition and society’s expectations surrounding their management. Their aim is to develop services and advocate for resources that respect the inherent worth of each individual while fostering a healthy society.

In this edition of *Healthcare Quarterly*, we are pleased to feature articles from leaders in law and justice and practitioners in forensic mental health who generously share their hands-on experiences and insights. They bring us closer to a part of the health system that has far too long been segregated and

institutionally isolated from mainstream health, to the detriment of individuals and society. Most importantly, they help us recognize the humanity of a stigmatized and marginalized population facing a health condition that urgently needs collaboration and appropriate care from other sectors of the healthcare system.

We thank our contributors for broadening our understanding of the impact of forensic mental health on individuals and society. It calls for thoughtful comprehension by the health system to make informed decisions about resource allocation and the development of effective services for prevention and early detection. Utilization and length of stay in forensic mental health is an indicator of the overall performance of the health system. It underscores that confining and containing patients because of a lack of community and social services is a fundamentally unjustifiable action for a health service to take. Such an action not only compromises our ethical obligation but also impedes the compassionate care that every individual deserves.

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## Reference

Patel, V., S. Saxena, C. Lund, S.G. Thornicroft, F. Baingana, P. Bolton et al. 2018. The *Lancet* Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development. *The Lancet* 392(10157): 1553–98. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31612-X.

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## About the Authors

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