

INTER-PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION AMONG MEMBERS OF THE MENTAL
HEALTH TEAM AT VHEMBE DISTRICT OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

by

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ABSTRACT

Despite the available literature on the effectiveness and efficiency of inter-professional collaboration, members of the mental health team continue to operate in silos. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the status of inter-professional collaboration among members of the mental health team in Vhembe district. This was a qualitative, descriptive and contextual study. Five core members of the mental health team from selected hospitals were purposively selected, namely the medical practitioner, the clinical psychologist, the occupational therapist, the social worker and the psychiatric nurse.

Four focus group discussions were conducted to collect data making use of a research assistant and an interview guide. Data was recorded, transcribed, and analysed using the Tesch 8 steps of data analysis. The findings of this study included the understanding, benefits, functionality and barriers of inter-professional collaboration as well as the recommendations.

Five themes inclusive of: understanding of inter-professional collaboration, the benefits of inter-professional collaboration, the state of functionality of inter-professional collaboration, the barriers to inter-professional collaboration, and measures to improve inter-professional collaboration. The main recommended measures included: commitment to the use of a team approach; conducting in-service training on inter-professional collaboration, ensuring the use of coordinated scheduled quality multi-disciplinary team meetings; and management support.

Inter-professional collaboration was understood as the working together as a collective. Efficiency in the management of a mental health care user was seen as the benefits thereof.

Functionality of inter-professional collaboration varied from efficient to less efficient according to health facilities. Health facilities also varied in terms of barriers encountered though there were common ones. Measures to improve inter-professional collaboration were stipulated: commitment to the use of a team approach; in-service training on inter-professional collaboration, the use of coordinated quality multi-disciplinary team meetings; and management support.

Key words: Inter-professional collaboration, mental health team member; multidisciplinary team, mental health care user, mental health unit.

ACCRONYMS

MDT	Multi-Disciplinary Team
FGD	Focus Group Discussion