

REPORT: WORKSHOP ON THE TIRISANO TRAINING PROGRAMME ON CHRONIC STRESS AND NON-COMMUNICABLE CHRONIC MENTAL DISORDERS

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The Tirisano Training Project (TTP) hosted a workshop on the training programme on Chronic Stress and Non-communicable Chronic Mental Disorders on 13 July 2017 at the Indaba hotel, Johannesburg, South Africa. The training programme was made possible by the UCLA-South Africa Center for Chronic Mental Disorders. The TTP is a collaborative training programme between the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and the South African Research Consortium, which comprises the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), the North-West University (NWU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT). The TTP's vision is to increase the clinical and research skills of South African post-baccalaureate, masters, and pre-doctoral-level scholars. The aim of the workshop was to provide content lectures on chronic stress and non-communicable mental disorders, and the importance of research and its ability to inform good clinical practices. The TTP comprises students, clinicians and academic lecturers from different fields of study and professions in the area of the Health Sciences.

The workshop was officially opened by Prof. Gail E. Wyatt, of the UCLA and Principal Investigator of the TTP. Prof. Wyatt and Prof. Norweeta G. Milburn, of the UCLA, introduced the TTP and its objectives, with the chief objective being to present to scholars in the Health Sciences an opportunity to develop and harness skills in research or clinical research. They also described the conceptual framework. Other

instructors who provided content lectures were Prof. Hector F. Myers, of the Vanderbilt University, Prof. Mashudu Davhana-Maselesele, of the NWU, and Dr Suzana A. Lopez, of the UCLA.

The workshop afforded the TTP scholars for 2017, Mrs Miriam Moagi of the University of Pretoria, and Mr Khonzanani Mbatha of the University of South Africa, a platform to share their experiences of the three-month training they received at the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, UCLA, from March to June 2017. Training was provided on the following:

- The effect of stress on health across the lifespan: Biological dysregulation and chronic mental disorders.
- Social and economic aspects of trauma.
- An introduction to human subjects research and ethics in the conduct of human research in community and clinical settings.
- Qualitative and mixed-methods research: Data collection and analysis.
- Research methods for investigating post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSDs), depression and substance use, and PTSDs in clinical and community-based settings.

Lastly on the programme was a panel discussion by the instructors on developing culturally congruent interventions. The discussion touched on different approaches to developing culturally congruent mental health, substance abuse, HIV, and trauma-related interventions. The idea of cultural competence and congruent research is attributed to the integration of culturally specific knowledge in each component of the research. Prof. Wyatt, Prof. Milburn, Prof. Davhana-Maselesele and Prof. Meyers gave their views on encountered incidents and examples of this idea regarding the improvement of health and healthcare utilisation among underprivileged and underserved populations that are affected by diseases and other social ills. We were awarded a fair platform to ask questions, share experiences and engage with the content presented.

The experience gained from the workshop undoubtedly opened and widened our views as participants in the treatment of chronic stress and non-communicable chronic mental disorders. The workshop had an impact on how we as student nurses and a senior lecturer can now carry out informed interventions in the clinical area, and also taught us the importance of research in the field of Health Sciences.

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