

Transforming Perinatal Mental Health (PMH) Care in Jabalpur: Jhpiego Facilitates the First PMH Observership Visit to the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore

Globally one in five women suffer from some form of mental health disorder either during pregnancy or after childbirth. In India, as per the National Mental Health Survey (2015-2016), 1 in 10 persons suffers from depression and of these 20% are pregnant women and new mothers.

Maternal mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders, often go undetected and untreated. They can have a severe impact on the health of the woman and the newborn and adversely affect the child's future growth and development. Extreme cases of mental illness among mothers may lead to an increased risk of suicide or infanticide.

Jhpiego's PMH project, which is currently being piloted in Jabalpur with support from USAID, aims to mainstream and integrate perinatal mental health components into existing MNCH services.

As a part of this project, Jhpiego facilitated the visit of a team of Psychiatrists, obstetricians, and nurses from the Jabalpur public facilities to the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), the premier institute for mental health in India.

The participants engaged in a 360-degree learning experience from clinical case discussions at the Mother-Baby unit (MBU) to the community-based interventions at the peripheral NIMHANS Center for Wellbeing.

This was the first of a kind that an Observership and learning visit was facilitated to provide an opportunity to witness the cutting-edge research and patient care practices at the Perinatal Mental Health Department in NIMHANS, led by Prof Dr Prabha Chandra.

The interdisciplinary approach taken by NIMHANS was particularly noteworthy, with psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers collaborating seamlessly to provide holistic care that was patient-centered care with the integration of family support.

Over six days, the training covered a comprehensive agenda, focusing on equipping participants with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective perinatal mental health care aimed at integrating mental health components into existing maternal health services. It emphasized the importance of empathy in clinical practice, the complexities of perinatal mental health disorders, and the significance of comprehensive assessments were discussed.

Specialized areas like Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT), community engagement strategies, and telepsychiatry were also observed. Family involvement, particularly the role of husbands in perinatal mental health was highlighted.

The key learnings entailed a deeper understanding of the range of treatment options, and the importance of holistic care.

The training program concluded with strong recommendations for strategic planning for the establishment of perinatal mental health services in Jabalpur, with a focus on practical implementation steps including sharing simplified training resources, fostering collaboration between departments, engaging community workers, and establishing a dedicated PMH Outpatient Department.

Reflections and Feedback from the Trainees

The workshops were interactive and engaging. I appreciated the opportunity to apply what I learned through practical exercises and case studies. The NIMHANS team created a supportive and inclusive learning environment. They encouraged questions and discussions, making us feel valued.

Dr. Archana Thakur, Senior Gynecologist, Jabalpur Medical College, Jabalpur

The faculty at NIMHANS are experts in their field. Their knowledge and experience were evident throughout the training. I learned from the best.

Dr. Deepmala Totade, Senior Gynecologist, Elgin Hospital, Jabalpur

The training provided real-world skills and strategies that I can use in my clinical practice. It was not just theoretical but practical and actionable.

Dr. Shruti Singh, PGM, Psychiatry Department, Jabalpur Medical College, Jabalpur

The hands-on training at NIMHANS was incredibly informative and provided comprehensive learning. I feel much more equipped to address PMH issues after this program. I was impressed by NIMHANS holistic approach to PMH. They emphasized not only diagnosis and treatment but also the importance of support and counseling.

Dr. Neeta Parashar, Elgin Superintendent, Jabalpur

Meeting fellow professionals from diverse backgrounds was a bonus. The networking opportunities at NIMHANS allowed us to share experiences and learn from each other.

Dr. Anupama Rao, Advisor, Clinical Trainings, Jhpiego, Delhi

I appreciate that the training incorporated the latest research and evidence-based practices in PMH. NIMHANS has set a high standard for quality care.

Dr. Rupal Srivastava, Senior Program Officer, PMH, Jhpiego, Jabalpur

The course materials and resources provided were extensive and valuable. They will serve as a great reference in my practice.

Gayatri Verma, Psychiatric Nursing Officer, Jabalpur Medical College, Jabalpur

Glimpses from the Visit



Mother Baby Ward, NIMHANS



Perinatal Rounds with Case Discussions by Prof. Dr. Prabha Chandra



Interactive Session with Activities- Paint your Present Mood, Wheel of Emotions, and Discussions on Morality Questions



Innovative Strategies for Social Media Campaign and IEC content by Dr. Latha, NIMHANS Health Education Department



Session in Mother-Infant Bonding by Prof. Thomas Kishore at NIMHANS Digital Academy



Observing a Group Session being led by Medical Social Worker in the PMH OPD, NIMHANS



Brief Introduction to the ANM Training Manual on PMH developed by Dr. Vijayalakshmi



Trainees along with NIMHANS Faculty- Dr. Prabha Chandra & Dr. Sundarnag