

ABSTRACT

PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVED PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES IN THE SOUTH WEST REGION OF TRINIDAD

Indar Ramtahal

The South West Region, which comprises counties Victoria and St. Patrick, has a population of 364,565, accounting for 29.2% of the total population of Trinidad and Tobago. At the present time, the psychiatric service provided within the South West Region is a fragmented one. The service enjoys only partial sectorisation. Inpatient services for general psychiatry are shared between the San Fernando General Hospital and the state mental hospital at St. Ann's. Forensic services are also provided at St. Ann's Hospital. Services for children and adolescents are provided at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, and services for substance abusers, at the Caura Hospital. The latter three facilities are situated outside of the South West Region

In this report, data are presented to identify the psychiatric needs within the South West Region. Proposals are then put forward to promote a more autonomous psychiatric service within the South West Region. Autonomy is thought to be a

necessary ingredient of the Regional Health Authorities being introduced in Trinidad and Tobago at the present time. Data were collected from the case registers at Ward One San Fernando General Hospital, the General Psychiatric Clinics within the South West Region, the Substance Abuse and Child Guidance Clinics, the Extended Care Centre, and acute and chronic wards at St. Ann's Hospital, for the period 1st January 1991 to 31st December 1995.

Results indicate that the South West Region is heavily dependent on services outside of its catchment area. It is proposed that, with the exception of Forensic services, all psychiatric services, including general psychiatric services, services for children and adolescents and substance abuse services, be comprehensively provided within the South West Region.

This project was undertaken so that scientific data presented to the Ministry of Health, can sensitize national health care planners to the urgent need for improved psychiatric services.