

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM – KOVALAM

ANNUAL REPORT

The year 2005 saw yet another initiative of The Banyan being launched- the community rural outreach at Kovalam. The single largest reason for homelessness amongst persons with mental illness is lack of access to care. The Banyan had established a rapport with the fishing folk of Kovalam and the Dargah at Kovalam is one of the centres for faith healing and hence it was appropriate that the rural outreach should be established in Kovalam and that it be offered in the form of holistic health care.



On January 17, 2006 the health centre started its activities from the Trinity Hospital's rural outpost in Kovalam. The mental health camps continued to be held once a month. Slowly the client base improved. In July 2006, it was decided that more structure should be given to the program. It was decided that the

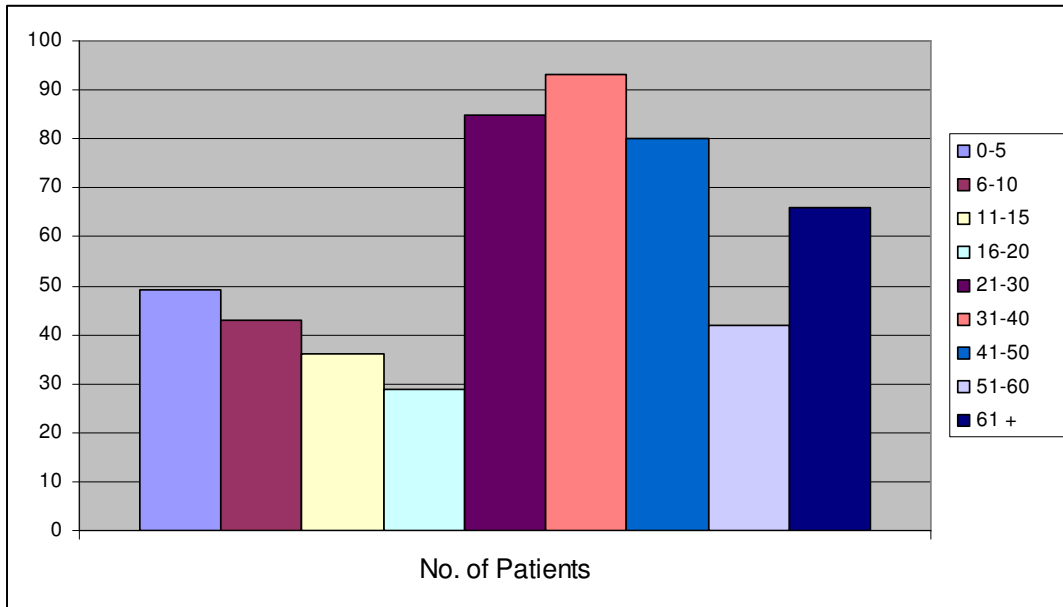
entire Thiruporur block should have access to the mental health services and a sustainable, replicable model of holistic health care delivery be established in this block. There are 50 villages in this block and the focus is currently on a survey in these villages, awareness on mental health and the facility, training doctors and paramedics in the primary health centres in this block and mainstreaming mental health into general health services.

The Bhoomi Pooja for the health centre was performed in March 2006. The building construction is almost ready and will be inaugurated in March 2007.

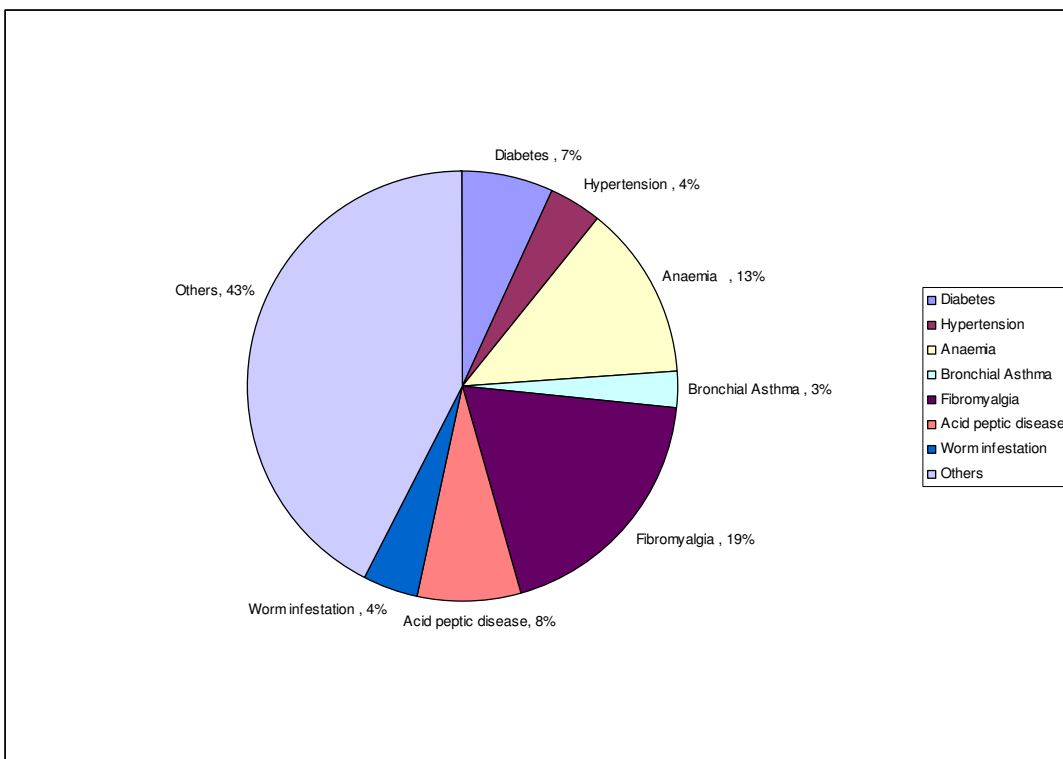
GENERAL HEALTH CLINIC

The general health clinic is conducted 3 days a week. Till December 31, 2006 519 patients had registered.

Classification according to age group



Special camps are also conducted periodically depending on health issues addressed. A diabetic camp was held in March 2006. So far we have 35 patients with diabetes registered at the centre. Camps are held on the last Saturday of every month. A diabetologist and a dietitian are present during this camp.

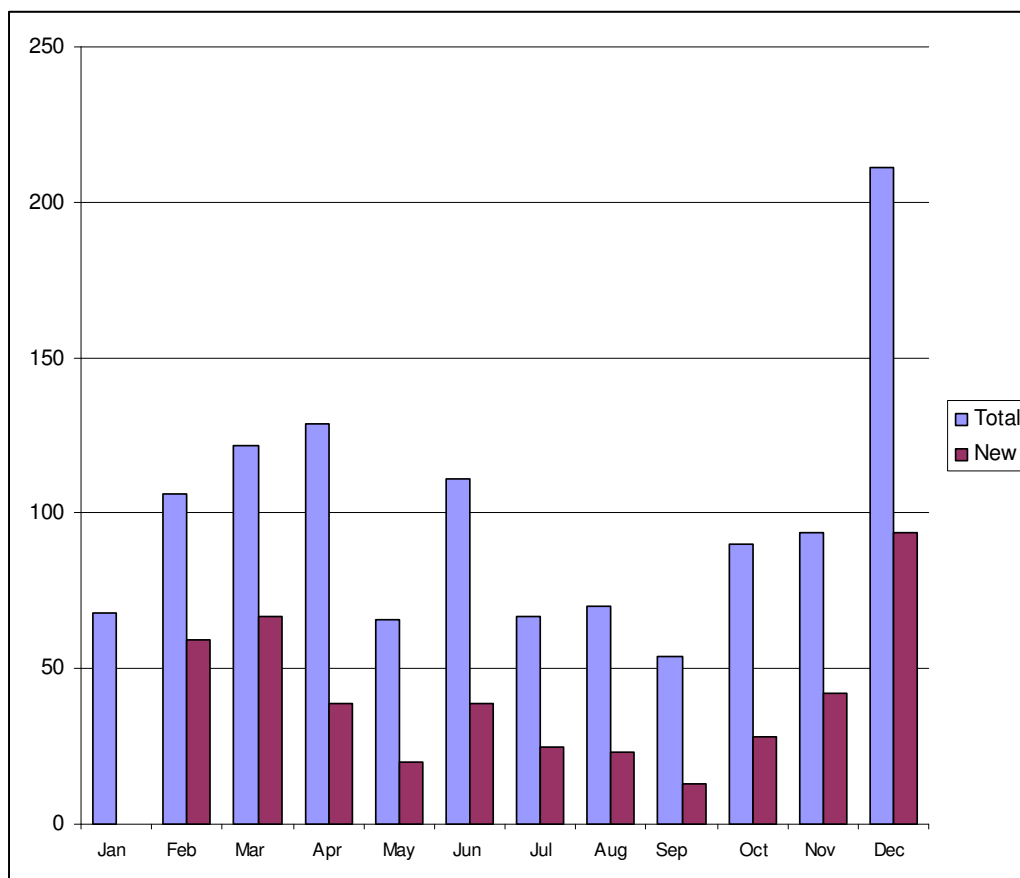


In the month of September, a paediatric camp was held. The stress was on breast feeding, healthy dietary practice and hygiene.

In the month of October a dental camp was held. Clients were given tips on brushing techniques and oral hygiene.

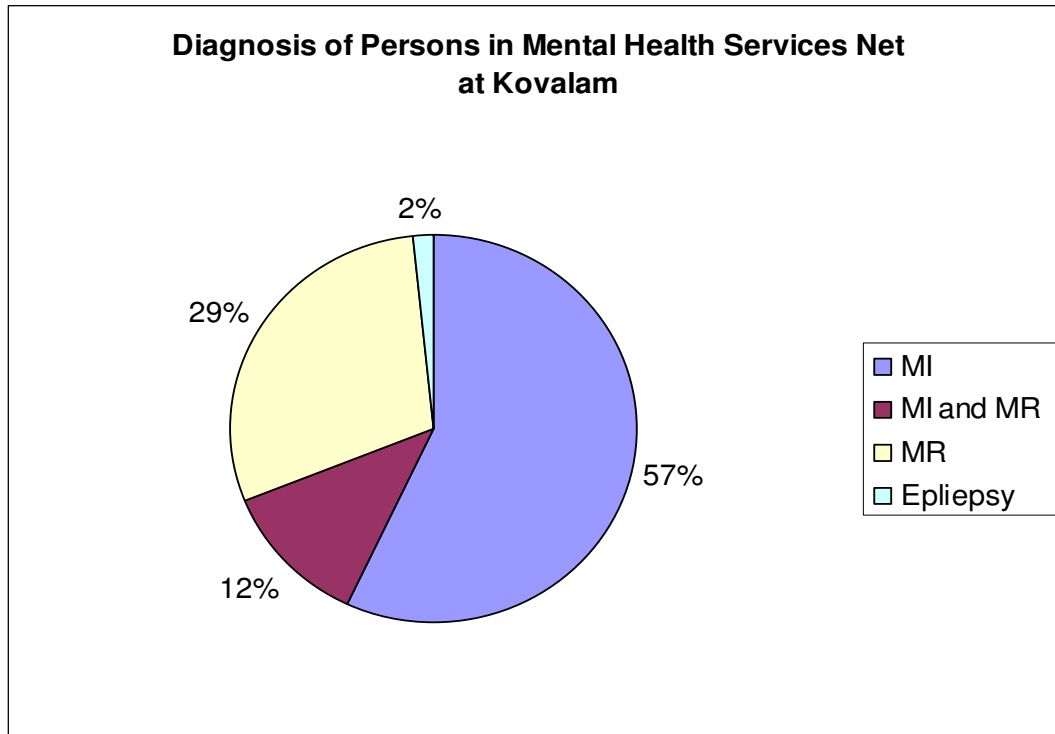
A lot of women in the reproductive age group complain of tiredness, body aches etc. Anaemia was commonly seen among children and women in this age group. Hence an anaemia camp was held in November. The Hb level was assessed using a simple and inexpensive technique. All patients with anaemia were dewormed and given haematinics. They were also given dietary counseling.

No. of Patients attending the clinic every month

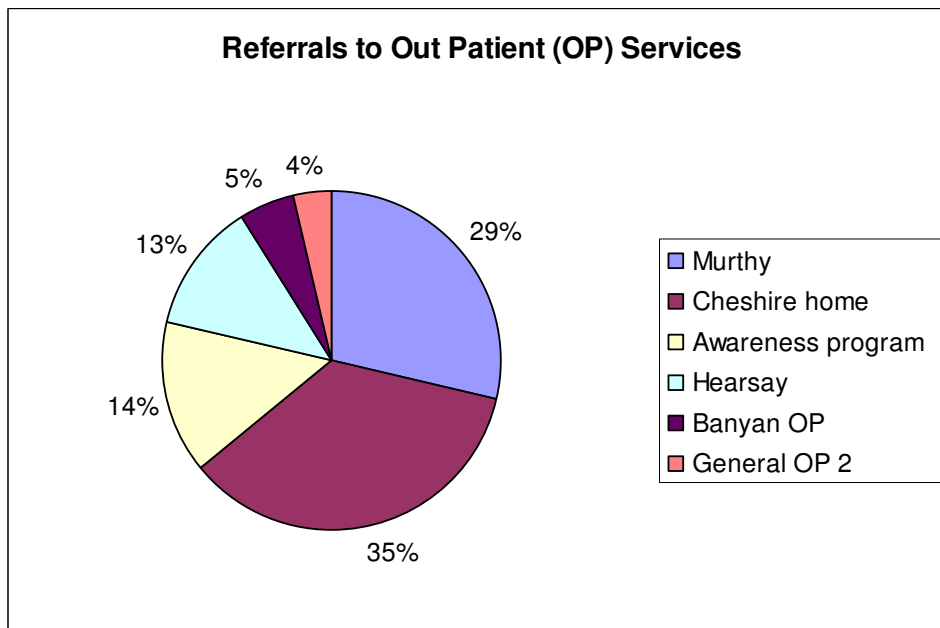


MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC

This clinic is held once a month at Kovalam. So far 59 patients have registered at the clinic. Patients with mental illness, mental retardation and epilepsy attend this clinic.



Referrals to the clinic happen through word of mouth, community worker from Banyan and Cheshire home and through awareness program.



Since the primary goal is to integrate mental health into general health services, from the month of December follow ups started happening at the general health clinic. All these patients are followed up with a home visit by the community worker. In case of any specific problems like non compliance to drug, failure to attend the OP continuously for a period of 3 months follow up visits were done by the doctor or the social worker. The response to these home visits has been good.

So far 9 patients have been lost to follow up. 3 are of them are persons with mental illness and the reason could be that they are from places that are more than 200kms away. The other 6 are mentally challenged and some of them attend special schools.

AWARENESS :



Awareness is an integral part of the community mental health program. A lot of structure was given to this program in the latter half of the year. In the month of November a grand touring street theatre was launched using a bullock cart. This bullock cart goes into the entire village accompanied by artists dancing, singing songs that have relevance to mental health and cyclists distributing pamphlets. This ends with a street theatre in a common area of the village. A minimum of 2-3 awareness programs are held every month.

SUPPORT GROUP ACTIVITY

The support group activity was started in September. Initially there were only 3 people attending this activity regularly. Now the numbers have gone upto 5. This is likely to go up further in a couple of months time. The patients who attend this activity are given specific tasks and their performance assessed. Within a couple of months an increase was noticed in the motivation and concentration levels and grooming and communication skills have also improved. This facility will be extended across disabilities and will grow in to a day care facility in March 2007.

SURVEY



It is very important to have a baseline data on the 50 villages to assess impact. A survey has been launched with the help of Balwadi teachers in 7 panchayats and will be extended to other panchayats as well in

January. This survey would include demographic details,

socio economic status, disability burden and health seeking patterns. The survey is closely monitored by the CMHP team.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Community ownership and participation is very important for the success of any community based initiative. The youth club takes active participation in the street theatre programs. The SHG groups are periodically met and issues discussed. A networking is also being established with other NGOs in the area.



A Christmas party was held in Kovalam. Around 160 people (children, SHGs, youth club, cross disability group) attended the party. The children sang and danced. The women took part in musical chair and tug of war. A community bonding was established.

Planting trees, cleaning the beach are some of the activities planned for January with the youth club members. An employer database is also in the process of being established in the coastal belt for persons who have recovered from mental illness or their family members.

The year 2006 has been an action packed year and there is more action awaiting the CMHP team.