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Varsity hosts national seminar in Guwahati

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Guwahati - A university department in northeast India ([/taxonomy/term/2367](#)) held two day national seminar on mental health and social work practices in Guwahati on April 27 to 28 where as many as 130 people participated at the 17 presentations.

Assam Don Bosco (/taxonomy/term/2412) University (ADBU (/taxonomy/term/268)) department of Social (/taxonomy/term/1938) Work, in collaboration with Psychiatric Social (/taxonomy/term/1938) Work Services, Department of Psychiatry, Guwahati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) and the Department of Psychiatric Social (/taxonomy/term/1938) Work, LGB Regional Institute of Mental Health (/taxonomy/term/51) (LGBRIMH), Tezpur organised at ADBU (/taxonomy/term/268) Tapesia Campus (/taxonomy/term/269).

Incidentally, LGBRIMH is one of the oldest mental health care institutes in India (/taxonomy/term/2367) established in the year 1876. It is located in Tezpur in Sonitpur district of Assam. Over the years, this tertiary mental health care institute has been playing a major role in catering to the entire population of the Northeast part of the country.

“The specific aim of the seminar was to explore and understand the different aspects of mental health as a cross cutting issue in social work practice and political life of the region,” says Dr. Bornali Das (/taxonomy/term/1926), one of the organizing member of the seminar.

The seminar aimed “to explore the recent development in mental health and social work practice relating to women’s mental health,” adds Dr Das (/taxonomy/term/1926).

“The ever increasing stress in our lives at the present times owing to the multifarious demands (/taxonomy/term/2467) of both personal and professional domains coupled with social (/taxonomy/term/1938) and economic factors influencing one’s life imply the vulnerability towards mental illness has increased,” says Director of the School of Social (/taxonomy/term/1938) sciences and HoD of Social (/taxonomy/term/1938) Work Department Dr Riju Sharma.

Dr Sharma laments the fact that “The health [mental health for that matter] of women are accorded less importance, even though women were more prone to mental illness owing to their social and economic status in a male dominated society.”

The Seminar (/taxonomy/term/43) Cum Workshop had prominent speakers from across India (/taxonomy/term/2367) on various topics relating to Mental Health (/taxonomy/term/51) and Psychosocial care, Social (/taxonomy/term/1938) Work in Mental Health (/taxonomy/term/51), Women’s Mental Health (/taxonomy/term/51), Sculpting the SELF for Mental Health (/taxonomy/term/51) Practices, Positive Parenting and Social (/taxonomy/term/1938) work practices in industrial setting and many others.

The Chief Guest at the inaugural function was Padmasri Mukul Chandra Goswami, Secretary, Ashadeep.

Prof (/taxonomy/term/2077). Kalpana Sarathy, Deputy Director of Tata Institute of Social (/taxonomy/term/1938) Sciences, Guwahati delivered the key note address.

Other eminent personalities included Fr. (Dr.) Stephen Mavelly, Vice Chancellor, ADBU (/taxonomy/term/268), Dr. Bornali Das (/taxonomy/term/1926), Senior Lecturer Psychiatric Social (/taxonomy/term/1938) Work, Department of Psychiatry, Guwahati Medical College and Hospital; Dr Riju Sharma, Director, School of Humanities and Social (/taxonomy/term/1938) Science, ADBU (/taxonomy/term/268).

Speaking at the inauguration, Padmashri Mukul Chandra Goswami stated that “almost all the states in our country still grapple with mental health and the stigma, discrimination that has been associated with it for centuries without denying the fact that the social work profession has evolved much in the North Eastern Region during the recent past.”

“A rich real-world experience must back the theoretical understanding if one has to be a true catalyst in the society today” said Dr Stephen Mavelly, Vice Chancellor, ADBU ([/taxonomy/term/268](#)) while commenting on the responsibility of the social work professionals and trainers in fusing the essence of academics with actual field experiences.

Dr Mavelly also reminded the gathering “Not to philosophize social work”.

Prof ([/taxonomy/term/2077](#)). Kalpana Sarathy stressed on the need for the integration of mental health and social work while providing the participants with an elaborative understanding of the evolution of social work in the region while Dr Riju Sharma emphasised on the need of citizen-centric and enabling social niches that could be generated through meaningful participation and partnership between institutions/agencies and communities.

“Citizen-centric and enabling social niches would not only promote treatment of mental health disorders but also advocate for overarching directions on broader issues for ensuring mental health promotion” asserted Dr Riju.

“Professional social work occurs at the interface between people and their contexts and takes into cognizance their overall wellbeing,” says ADBU ([/taxonomy/term/268](#)) MSW faculty member Prof ([/taxonomy/term/2077](#)) Shanthalembi Lisham highlighting the thought behind the programme.

Assistant Prof (/taxonomy/term/2077) Lisham insists, “Social (/taxonomy/term/1938) work practitioners from different specialties need to incorporate mental health as a component in their service. With the increasing number of trained professional social (/taxonomy/term/1938) workers (/taxonomy/term/2406) in North East (/taxonomy/term/2419) India (/taxonomy/term/2367), a discourse and discussion on mental health and social work practice is crucial.”

The Two day national seminar had presentations from renowned experts from across the country which included Dr Rajaram Subian, International Psychosocial Consultant & Trainer, Executive Director – Basic Needs India (/taxonomy/term/2367); Dr. Sonia P Deuri, Professor, LGBRIMH, Tezpur; Dr Kavita V Jangam, Asst. Professor, NIMHANS, Bengaluru; Aranind Raj, Associate Proffesor, department of Psychiatric social work NIMHANS, Bengaluru; Dr Anjana Goswami, Founder, Ashadeep, Guwahati.

By Gisel Erumachadathu

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