DOUBLE TROUBLE: SUICIDE AND POLIOMYELITIS BOTH A PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN.

Editorial

By: Mazyanga Lucy Mazaba

Citation Style For This Article: Mazyanga L. Double trouble: Suicide and Poliomyelitis both a public health concern. Health Press Zambia Bull. 2019; 3(10); pp 1-2.

“Worldwide, developed and developing countries are facing the double burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases” [1]. The Health Press Zambia in the month of October joined the global family in commemorating two health days, World Mental Health Day and World Polio Day. In this issue we publish a short communication on suicidal ideation among adults, this subject being the focus of our editorial. According to this short communication published in this issue by Daka et.al., the World Health Organization estimates suicide rate for Zambia at 6.1 (8.8 among males and 3.5 among female) per 100000 population. The editorial also gives a brief on poliomyelitis, a disease targeted for elimination and yet threatened by resurgence in some areas. As a follow up to World Rabies day that fell in September, we publish a policy brief by Nakazwe et.al. who are advocating on policy options that can accelerate attaining zero rabies deaths in Zambia. THP-Z has included in this issue an update on the notifiable diseases in Zambia and the trends relating to influenza in Zambia.

SUICIDE: A Mental Health growing concern.

The month October has many observations of events and situations globally. Of public health significance is the World Mental Health Day. This day celebrates awareness for the global community in an empathetic way to help people feel hopeful by empowering them to take action and create lasting change. This year the Mental Health Day was celebrated with the theme “focus on suicide prevention”. We say a day of public health significance because according to the WHO reports, every 40 seconds, someone loses their life to suicide [2].

Suicide described as the act of intentionally causing one’s own death has been attributed to various factors among them being mental health disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, personality disorders, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse including alcoholism and the use of benzodiazepines [3]. Although the history of suicide spans over centuries, the scale is tipping to an alarming rate with a recorded 800,000 people committing suicide annually. “Suicidal behavior has existed throughout human history, but due to several complex factors, it has increased gradually in all parts of the world and, in the past few decades, has reached alarming statistical levels” according to President of World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH), Dr. Alberto Trimbo [4]. It starts with a thought (s), then an attempt(s) and usually ends in actualization.

SOURCE: www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/suicide-prevention-wait

But something can be done about it to reduce if not curtail these numbers. Suicide can be prevented!

The precursor to suicide is usually ideation, these being thoughts to commit suicide that preoccupy the mind. It is a major problem among youth leading to up-to 6% of deaths among them [5]. The reduction to suicidal ideation and risk to suicide actualisation could be tackled by placing interventions that tackle factors leading to suicidal ideation and actualisation [6].
Poliomyelitis – ups and downs

World Polio Day that falls on 24th October, the birth date of Jonas Salk, leader of the first team to develop a vaccine against poliomyelitis (polio). World Polio Day celebrates the individuals and organizations that have contributed to the eradication of polio and highlights the remaining challenges. The 2019 theme is Stories of Progress: Past and present for World Polio Day [7]. Coincidentally, Zambia recently recorded a case of poliomyelitis in Chienge District, Luapula Province, almost two and a half decades after the last indigenous case that occurred in Lusaka in 1995. Zambia has immediately launched a vaccination campaign alongside enhanced surveillance and contact tracing. A further three imported cases were recorded in 2002 among refugees from Angola. Polio is a vaccine preventable disease commonly among children. Its resurgence in many states is due to reduced herd immunity mainly caused by low vaccination coverage. Polio cases globally have decreased by over 99% since 1988, from an estimated more than 350,000 cases to 33 reported cases in 2018. This reduction is the result of the global effort to eradicate the disease [7,8]. Although resurgence of polio globally is saddening news, it’s elating to note the progress made so far in the Global Polio Eradication program; types 2 and 3 poliovirus have been eradicated globally. “However, despite progress, there is still much left to be done across the globe. The key is to reach every last child with the polio vaccine, strengthen routine immunization and surveillance, and ensure safe containment of polioviruses.” As long as there is one child infected, there is a risk of 200,000 cases globally [8]. Let us together raise awareness on prevention though vaccination leveraging on our strengths and gains to mitigate the retrogress.

LIST OF REFERENCES