**Health Expenditures and Sustainable Development Goals: Implications for Mental Health Financing in Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background**

The fifth goal of sustainable development goals (SDGs) aimed to achieve health and wellbeing at all ages. One of the targets of this goal is to ensure universal coverage of quality healthcare for mental health disorder. Household remains the major source of health financing in Nigeria with households’ health expenditures ranging between 60% and 74% while public health expenditures remain largely around 15% and 27%. There is no statistics available for the proportion of mental health expenses in total health expenditures in Nigeria. Usually, the index of measuring government mental health expenditures in Nigeria is the proportion of health expenditures going into mental health hospitals. At present only about 3.3% of the health budget of the federal government goes to mental health, with over 90% of this going to mental hospitals and no government policy exits that suggest an increase in the proportion of government health budget going into mental health care in Nigeria. Current data shows that mental health care is majorly financed by out-of-pocket expenditures. This study examines the trends and growth of expenditures allocation to mental health care from 2002-2015 in Nigeria and the rate at which public health expenditures to mental health needs to grow to meet SDGs. This is to take a stock of current situation on mental health spending in Nigeria as the world began the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Methods**

The study employed growth rate and proportions to determine the level and rate of expenditures allocations to mental health by each source of health financing means from 2002-2015. Deficit in allocation were estimated for all the years to gauge the required growth rate of health expenditures allocation to mental health for subsequent years.

**Results**

Funds required for financing mental health services to reach desired coverage are substantial compared to the current allocation of resources in Nigeria. Expenditures allocation to mental health from sources of health financing is below 5% for all the years considered. A growth rate of about 12% is required for public expenditures on mental health to set Nigeria on trajectory of universal coverage for mental health disorder.

**Conclusions**

Emphasis on out-of-pocket financing for mental health may further impoverish households with mental health disorder. There is urgent need to set budget allocation on mental health aside from general health budget allocation. Social health insurance also needs to explicitly incorporate mental health disorder into its benefit packages.