

BACKGROUND

Name of the project: Training nurses, General Medical Officers (GMOs), Allied Health Workers (AHW), Herbal and Spiritual Healers and the community on epilepsy management

Date: 12 June 2024

Venue: Kunaka Hospital

Number of Persons Attending: 30

Sponsoring Organization: Zimbabwe League Against Epilepsy (ZLAE) and International League Against Epilepsy

Purpose of the training: To bridge knowledge gaps about epilepsy in Zimbabwe

Expectations: How to handle persons with epilepsy

- To know about epilepsy traditional beliefs
- How to treat and diagnose epilepsy
- Counseling
- To know more about the causes, signs and symptoms of epilepsy
- Information dissemination
- To know if epilepsy is contagious or not

PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

Participant	Number
Herbal healers	1
Community Health Workers	5
Social worker	0
Nurses	13
Member	0
Allied Health Workers	11
GMOs	0
Doctor	0
Physiotherapist	0

RESOURCE PROFILE

NAME	DESIGNATION	TOPIC
Miss Mhanda	Social Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expectations and purpose of training• Myths and misconceptions about epilepsy
Mr Kadzviti	ZLAE Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zimbabwe League Against Epilepsy• Epilepsy Support Foundation• Epilepsy as an Invisible Disability
Miss Perekwa	Student intern	Epilepsy Resource Centre Zimbabwe

Training Summary

On the 12th of June 2024, Zimbabwe League Against Epilepsy sponsored a project on training nurses, general medical officers, allied health workers, herbal and spiritual healers and the community on epilepsy management. The training was open to nurses, general medical officers, allied health workers, spiritual and herbal healers, community health workers and approximately thirty people were in attendance.

Mr Kahomwe, of Kunaka Hospital was the coordinator and he gave the opening remarks on behalf of the District Medical Officer. He placed the house in order, introduced the ERCZ members to different stakeholders including nurses, general medical officers, allied health workers, herbal and spiritual healers. Everyone was welcomed to the training on epilepsy management.

First and foremost, the first presenter was Miss Mhanda as she presented on the expectations and purpose of the training. She emphasized that the training was on epilepsy management and further went to ask participants their expectations on the training and few participants managed to speak their minds out. Furthermore, she presented on the purpose of the training which was to meet the participants' expectations and she listed few purposes of the training namely, to

bridge knowledge gaps about epilepsy in Zimbabwe, to combat stigma associated with epilepsy in rural areas and to provide essential skills to health professionals in Zimbabwe.

She also shed light on the stigma, myths and misconceptions associated with epilepsy. She further emphasized that persons with epilepsy are stigmatized on a regular basis in different aspects of life and there are negative attitudes surrounding this condition probably this is because most people do not understand epilepsy. Some of the stigma associated with epilepsy are namely concern about having children, objection to marriage for persons with epilepsy, bullying and isolation in schools. She also listed various ways to reduce stigma namely educational campaigns, training, dispel the myths and misconceptions by sharing facts about epilepsy and taking epilepsy medicine.

The second presenter was Mr Kadzviti (ZLAE coordinator) who gave a presentation about Zimbabwe League Against Epilepsy (ZLAE) as he emphasized that the League was established in 2000 and is affiliated with the International League. Its purpose is to enhance the skills and knowledge of health professionals on epilepsy care in Zimbabwe. He further explained the mission of the ZLAE which is to help everyone involved in epilepsy care, especially in areas where resources are scarce. to access the knowledge and tools they need to understand, diagnose and treat epilepsy. He also listed certain goals of ZLAE namely advocating for epilepsy as a public health imperative, promoting research and innovation for epilepsy among others. He also shed light on Epilepsy Support Foundation and epilepsy as an invisible disability.

Miss Perekwa shed light on Epilepsy Resource Centre Zimbabwe. She further emphasized on the history and background of the organisation, its vision which is to reach out to all persons with epilepsy in Chitungwiza and the surrounding areas, its objectives namely creating a forum for organisations and support groups for persons with epilepsy to share ideas, advocating for legislation and policies which advance the rights and interests of persons with epilepsy. She also shed light on ERCZ main services which is research and evidence use, information dissemination and training and last but not least social work and support.

After the presentations, the participants were awarded with certificates for completing the Epilepsy Management Training Programme and later the training briefly adjourned to allow all participants to have their lunch.



Presentation of certificates to participants



Participants posing for group photos are being awarded certificates

Conclusively, Madzimai Nyembezi, one of the participants gave a vote of thanks to the sponsoring organisation, ZLAE and International League and to all the participants who attended the epilepsy management training.

Challenges faced

- **Miscommunication-** there was a misunderstanding on the date of the training, some of the participants visited the hospital twice on different dates and on the day of the training it was their third time. This caused a big challenge since there was need for compensation on transport costs.

Recommendations

- Disseminate information about epilepsy via district level.
- Information, people need to be well equipped about epilepsy management.
- Well packaged key messages about epilepsy management in the community.
- Road shows educating people on epilepsy.

Lessons learnt

- Implementers learnt that they should disseminate information on epilepsy management in rural and peri-urban areas to prevent stigma and discrimination at grass roots level.
- When organizing trainings, good communication skills are crucial