Responding to the Mental Health Service Needs of Rural-to-Urban Migrant Workers in China: Current Situation and Future Directions

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Abstract : Background: Chinese rural-to-urban migrant workers' mental health problems raise attentions from different social sectors. However, situation of present mental health services provided to this population has not been discovered. This study attempts to describe the current mental health service situation, identify the gaps and give the future directions based on the quantitative data. Methods: Questionnaire surveys were conducted among 2017 rural-to-urban migrant workers in 13 cities and 100 social work service organizations in 5 cities in 2014. Data was collected by face-to-face structured interview by trained interviewers. Findings: Migrant workers' mental health status was not good. Compared to the severity of mental distress, mental health service for this population was lacking and insufficient, which accounted for only 14.4% of all services in our sample. And the group work and case work were the most frequently-used methods. By estimating a series of regression models, we revealed that life experiences and working conditions were significantly associated with migrant workers' mental health status. Therefore, the macro social work practices aimed at this whole group were advocated to promote their mental wellbeing. That is, practitioners should not only focus on the improvement of migrant workers' emotion management capacity, but also pay attention to raise awareness and improve their living and working condition; not only concentrate on the solving of individuals' dilemma, but also promote gradual reformation of present labor regime and hukou system in China.