The Alan J. Flisher Memorial Lecture is an annual lecture to commemorate the life and work of the late Professor Alan J. Flisher. The Centre for Public Mental Health is a joint initiative of the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University and the Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health at the University of Cape Town.

Invites you to attend a presentation by

Professor Atalay Alem

“Mental Health Research in Ethiopia”

VENUE:
Room 3002, Psychology Dept.
R W Wilcocks Building

DATE:
Tuesday, 30 September 2014

TIME:
13:00 – 14h00
Biography

Professor Alem qualified in Medicine in 1983 from Addis Ababa University, Faculty of Medicine. In 1997 he obtained a PhD in mental health epidemiology from Umea University in Sweden. Dr. Alem worked for the Ministry of Health as a psychiatrist for a number of years and as a medical director of Amanuel Mental Hospital for six years before he joined Addis Ababa University in 2000. Currently, he is a consultant psychiatrist at Amanuel Hospital in addition to his academic position at Addis Ababa University. Since he joined Addis Ababa University, he has spearheaded the establishment of postgraduate program in the Department of Psychiatry which was established in 2003 and successfully created important links between the Department and other international institutions to collaborate in research and other academic activities.

His main focus of research for the last 20 years has been epidemiology of mental disorders in rural, urban, semi-nomadic and isolated islanter communities, in children and child laborers. He has been principal and co-investigator of the Butajira Mental Health Project which is the largest community based survey in the world for schizophrenia and bipolar disorders to identify and follow the cases from a rural community. He has authored and co-authored over 110 scientific papers. He also has been member of various global mental health bodies, and has served as reviewer and member of editorial board of various scientific Journals. Currently he is involved in various multi-centered, primary care focused, intervention studies in mental health.

Abstract

Ethiopia is the second most populous and one of the poorest sub-Saharan countries. As most low-income countries of Africa the country has relatively high morbidity and mortality rates from communicable and preventable diseases. Because of this, due attention has not been given for prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases in general, and mental health disorders in particular. Although there was no demand for mental health research by policy makers and health planners, a handful researcher group that exists in the country has conducted relevant and large scale epidemiological mental health studies in different population groups in the county over the last two decades. Using adapted measurers, epidemiology of mental disorders have been described in urban dwellers, farmers, pastoralists, islanders, childbearing women, children, child labourers and displaced people. Course and outcome of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder using a unique and predominantly rural cohort has also been described. Currently intervention trials at primary care level using task sharing model are being conducted in Ethiopia as part of multi center
low and middle income country studies. Contribution of the results of earlier studies in the development of mental health strategy in the country, challenges and opportunities to conduct such studies will be discussed.