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DEVELOPING ACCESS TO CARE IN MENTAL HEALTH IN MAURITANIA: THE NOUADHIBOU PILOT PROGRAM

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Rationale: Mental disorders are emerging as a major contributor to the Global Burden of Disease in developing countries. Nevertheless in Mauritania, as in most low-income-countries, access to mental health care remains inadequate. Psychotic patients suffer from stigmatization, paucity of qualified health professionals, and difficulties to have access to medicines.

Objective: The aim of the Nouadhibou pilot program is to demonstrate that access to care of schizophrenic patients could be drastically improved within partnerships between public and private sectors.

Method: The program was set up in October 2008 in Nouadhibou, Mauritania's second largest city. It combines:

- A strong awareness campaign about mental disorders, including, radio broadcasts, articles in national news papers, advocacy meetings with elected representatives, stakeholders and the civil society, and information meetings for the population.
- The development of a psychiatric department in the Nouadhibou general hospital with a staff trained to diagnose and treat psychotic disorders, deliver psycho educational modules, and liaise with health professionals from Nouadhibou area trained to diagnose psychosis.
- A sustainable supply of high quality antipsychotics (with a preferential pricing policy from sanofi-aventis).
- A strict assessment of the impact of the program.

Results: The presentation will include the present situation of mental health care in Mauritania, the program's content, the assessment tools and the first results.

Conclusion: Once the impact of this program is established, scaling the project to the rest of Mauritania will require commitments from different partners including the Ministry of Health, pharmaceutical industry, international organizations and funders.