

Solutions to an inability to deal with the mental stress, is now just a phone call away for residents of Pune..



Mental health initiative extended to city

As the next step in its mental health initiative, the Vandrevale Foundation will start offering services of its helpline and support services to residents of Pune.

The foundation, which started work in the area of mental health with a 24x7 mental health helpline in Mumbai, has made Pune the first city to be added on to the helpline grid which ultimately aims to have a Pan-India presence, said Dr Arun John, executive vice president. The helpline (022-25706000), offers telephonic counseling to people for a range of mental health issues.

Dr John said, "The helpline is manned by certified clinical psychologists who have been trained to counsel people over the phone. The counselors speak Marathi, Hindi and English. The helpline also has tie ups with

other support services to deal with psychiatric emergencies as well as assist people in various areas of mental healthcare." In addition to patients the helpline will be of great benefit to families as well as the general community.

The helpline follows a three-tier system wherein the call is received by a trained clinical psychologist and then depending upon the severity and complexity of the call, it is escalated to tier II level which is manned by trained psychiatrists. In life threatening cases, wherein the caller may exhibit violent or suicidal tendencies or in acute psychiatric emergencies, the call is escalated further and senior psychiatrists also get involved. The whole operation is backed up by an extremely sophisticated IT communication system where in eight people can simultaneously be in touch with the caller data.

Dr John informed that an overwhelming majority of callers were students who were unable to deal with the mental stress of examinations and anxiety about results.

Another 39 per cent related to depression caused by relationship and family issues, anxiety about children's or career.

"Only a minuscule percentage of the calls related to situations where the patients were suicidal. This is consistent with the fact that suicidal tendencies are an extreme phenomenon and emerge only if the underlying mental health issues are ignored for a long time," Dr John said.

After expanding its services to citizens of Pune the foundation plans extension of the service to other major cities of Maharashtra and the launch of support groups.