



Social Justice
for People with
Mental Illness



World Mind Matters Day

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MEDIA RELEASE

Only 48 per cent of commonwealth countries have a mental health policy

Mental health experts call for prioritisation of mental health in the Commonwealth by National Health Ministers

GENEVA, 5th September 2017: On World Mind Matters Day 2017, research funded by the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), of laws and policies in 52 countries of the Commonwealth reveals that only 48 per cent of Commonwealth countries have a mental health policy. Low income countries are more likely to have mental health policies than high income ones although numbers are small

For those countries with a mental help policy, the research also revealed that:

- Only 16% refer to equity of resources between physical and mental illness.
- 56% of the policies do not explicitly promote deinstitutionalization.
- Almost half (44%) of policies do not explicitly promote the integration of mental health services into general health services.
- Only half address mental health promotion and emphasize the need for research and evaluation in their mental health policies.

The findings have led the WPA to urge national health ministers throughout the Commonwealth to either introduce new mental health policy or review current policies to ensure that those with mental health problems receive help, care and treatment on an equal basis with other citizens. Examples of good practice in mental health policy development and key learnings from excellence in mental health policy have been developed by the WPA and can be found at <http://www.wpanet.org/>.

Dinesh Bhugra, President of the World Psychiatric Association said: “We call on national policy and law-makers in the 11 countries identified by our research to play their part by putting in place mental health policy to ensure that individuals affected by mental health problems receive the care and treatment they so urgently need and to ensure that mental health sector gets adequate attention.

He continued, “Finally, we call for mental health & mental health discrimination across the Commonwealth countries to be discussed as a priority during the Commonwealth Summit in London in April 2018. It is unacceptable in this day and age that not more is being done to protect the rights of people with mental disorders, across the Commonwealth. WPA is ready and willing to support countries in developing their policies or revising them where needed. To this end I am inviting Presidents of various mental health organisations to come together at the World Congress in Berlin in October 2017 and discuss how to upgrade mental health policies in their countries.”

According to the World Health Organisation, one in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives¹, meaning that up to 575 million people across the Commonwealth may be affected.

Detailed data from the WPA’s Commonwealth mental health policy research will be published in November 2017.

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For further information or to arrange an interview with Dinesh Bhugra or another member of the WPA Executive Committee, please contact:

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

About the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)

The WPA is the world's leading psychiatry organization. It is an association of national psychiatric societies, which aims to enhance the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively in the field of mental health and in the care of people with mental illness. It has 139 member societies from 117 countries representing over 225,000 psychiatrists.

The WPA has more than 72 individual scientific sections that cover almost every aspect of psychiatry. The purpose of the sections is to collect, analyse and disseminate information on research, training and services in the specific areas of psychiatry and mental health that they represent.

The WPA works to achieve its objectives through developing policy, meetings, research, education, publications and collaboration with other health/ mental health and government organizations. Visit <http://www.wpanet.org/> for further information.

About World Mind Matters Day

The WPA launched the first ever 'World Mind Matters Day' in 2015, a global campaign with the main goal of achieving fairness in mental healthcare for all across the world. More information can be found at <http://wpanet.org/WMMD/>.

References

1. WHO. Mental disorders affect one in four people. Press centre. Available at: http://www.who.int/whr/2001/media_centre/press_release/en/. Last accessed August 2017