

World Mental Health Day 2020

The seminar was organized by Pakistan Psychiatric Society (PPS) and Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Center (JPMC) Karachi at Najmuddin Auditorium. It was addressed by Prof. Dr. Afzal Javed (President-elect, World Psychiatric Association). Eminent psychiatrist Prof. Haroon Ahmed, President PPS Prof. Iqbal Afridi, Dr. Qaiser Abbass Zaidi (Chairman, British Pakistani Psychiatrist Association), Former Captain & the legendry cricketer Mr. Younus Khan, Prof. Dr. Unaiza Niaz, Prof. Lindsay Thomson & Dr. Khurram Khan from School of Forensic Medicine, and University of Edinburgh UK, Dr. Chooni Lal, Dr. Jawed Dars and several other national and international mental health experts.

Global experts on the eve of World Mental Health Day 2020 urged governments of developing countries to invest more on mental health as people have started facing impact of COVID-19 on their mental health and now new types of psychiatric illnesses are being observed all over the world including Pakistan.

Around 25 to 30 percent world's population is suffering from one or other types of mental ailments and their incidence is constantly on the rise due to COVID-19.

People from all walks of life including doctors, nurses, paramedics, religious scholars, media and legal personnel attended this event.

This event was further marked by Mental Health advocacy messages from distinguished personalities like Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan (Nuclear Scientist), Prof Raza Shah (Nanotechnologist), Prof Khalid Mufti, Dr Mujeeb Shad (President PAPANA), Dr Alaptagin Khan (Consultant Psychiatrist, Mc Lean Hospital, Harvard School of Medicine), Dr Arun Jha (Founder & Director of Memory First Aid International), Dr Marco Solmi (one of the Project Lead of COH-FIT Global Survey Project) to name a few.

Those office bearers of Pakistan Psychiatric Society who could not participate in person sent their written messages that were displayed as a digital presentation included Prof. Imtiaz Dogar (President Elect PPS), Dr Mukhtar-ul-Haq Azeemi (Secretary General PPS), Dr Shahin Haye, Dr Nasar Sayeed (Ex-President PPS), Dr Jamil Junejo (secretary, Sindh chapter), Dr. Abdul Wahab Yousufzai, Dr. Raza ur Rehman, Dr Ali Ahsan Mufti, Dr Imran Khan (Chapter chief, KPK) and Prof Asad Tamizuddin.

On this occasion, the Executive Director of JPMC Dr. Seemin Jamali, Chairman Sindh Mental Health Authority, Senator Karim Khuwaja, Ex-President Pakistan Society of Neurology, Prof Muhammad Wasay, Self Empowerment Center-Pakistan's Dr. Yasmin Khan, Psy D, USA sent their video messages.

The renowned actor Khalid Ahmed, faculty at NAPA and first Pakistani to win Harlem International Award (New York) for best actor, also graced the event and bravely shared his experience of facing mental health issues and yet rising above its challenge.

A skit related to the mental health theme was performed by the department which was much appreciated.

Furthermore, President Pakistan Psychiatric Society, Prof. Iqbal Afridi announced Prof. Haroon Ahmed Research Award of

PKR 150,000 cash prize in the field of Psychiatry to be given every year to one of the top research papers and dissertation. PPS would contribute PKR 1 million for the award while Prof. Haroon Ahmed also announced contributing PKR 1 million for the award.

Speaking as the Chief Guest at the Mental Health Conference with the theme "Mental Health for All: Greater Investment – Greater Access. Everyone, Everywhere", Prof. Haroon Ahmed said COVID-19 has started affecting the mental health of people all over the world and in Pakistan

people with a newer type of depression and symptoms of PTSD are approaching the psychiatrists for treatment.

“People are complaining of symptoms like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to COVID-19 related stress and experiences. A newer type of depression, which is not clinical depression, is also being observed where people are experiencing feelings of loneliness and lack of interest in daily life. These issues have a close relation to COVID-19 and its impacts on daily life of people”, he added.

Prof. Haroon Ahmed mentioned that it is heartening to note that people are breaking the taboos and publicly admitting that they are under treatment for depression, anxiety and other mental disorders, saying 70 percent of the depression is due to biochemical imbalance in the brain, which is not the fault of patient.

“I’m saying this for last several decades that there is no need to hide mental illnesses. In fact, some of the people with mental illnesses including depression and bipolar disorder”, he said and added that mental health is given low priority but it has high prevalence health issue and burden on our society.

President-elect WPA Prof. Afzal Javed claimed that prevalence of mental health issues is not less than cancer or cardiac ailments in the world and it is estimated that now 25 to 30 percent of the world’s population is suffering from one or other kind of mental illness, adding that it is right time that more resources are allocated for the mental wellbeing, treatment and cure in countries like Pakistan.

Congratulating PPS and JPMC’s Department of Psychiatry for the successful event, Prof. Afzal Javed claimed that several countries of the world had started observing COVID-19 mental health issues, especially those facing continuing conflicts and economic crisis like Pakistan said that it is the right time that the mental health institutes and this important area of medical science should be provided with ample resources to deal with the upcoming pandemic of mental health issues.

PPS President and Dean JPMC Prof. Iqbal Afridi said it is right time that people also start investing in their mental health, which means that they start doing exercise to prevent themselves from obesity, stop using drugs, and reduce their use of mobile phones and computers to stay mentally healthy.

Talking about COVID-19 related health issues, Prof. Afridi said Coronavirus anxiety and phobia as well as Touch-Deprivation phenomenon were some of the pandemic-related mental issues which are affecting the lives of people and called for creating awareness about mental health issues among common people. He further added this has resulted in severe form of fear CORONOPHOBIA, repeated rituals and ruminations (OCD) on one hand and on another end psychosocial complications in the form of financial and economic loss was also faced. Another phenomenon of Denial and Conspiracy theory was also noticed during the pandemic.

Former Captain & the legendry cricketer Mr. Younus Khan spoke about the importance of having mental health for sportsmen in taking critical decision making. While eminent psychiatrist Dr. Unaiza Niaz called for publicly hanging rapists and child molesters to give a sense of protection to people, especially children and women.

The Uniqueness of this seminar was great participation with physical participation observing COVID-19 SOPS, Audiovisual messages of people from all walks of life with live webcast through Zoom, LUMHS FM 96.6 and participation by various electronic and print media covering huge awareness among mass media.



