

Message from the WPA President

October 2020



Dear Friends

Let me first thank you all for your support to the WPA. It is indeed a pleasure to start my term as President and to lead this prestigious organisation over the coming triennium. It is my honour to represent our membership as we work together to strengthen our profession – especially during this difficult period.

Psychiatry is currently facing several challenges, and although our profession may be seen as being under threat, there are many opportunities that can help us consolidate psychiatry as an inspiring branch of medicine. The WPA is the umbrella organisation for psychiatrists worldwide and therefore has a major responsibility for leading the profession. This leadership can only be achieved through the full participation of our members and the engagement of our professional colleagues.

I am pleased that, despite the challenges presented to us, we were able to organise our General Assembly in a remarkably successful way. This is the first time in the history of the WPA that we have held the Assembly online. With the help of our Professional Congress Organising partner, Kenes, we were able to complete everything on our agenda as planned.

I am grateful for their assistance and for the work of our Secretariat in ensuring this excellent result. Similarly, the experience of having online elections was an impressive achievement.

I am sorry that we experienced a technical error in the tabulation of results, but its swift correction ensured a successful outcome nonetheless. Thanks to Civica for helping us with this task.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the candidates on running fair and honest campaigns under challenging conditions. A special congratulations to those that were successfully elected and a warm welcome to our incoming Executive Committee members: President-Elect, Danuta Wasserman; Secretary General, Petr Morozov; Secretary for Finances, Paul Summergrad; Secretary for Meetings: Edmond Pi; and of course, our very important Zonal Representatives.

It is also gratifying to note that the WPA General Assembly approved the proposed Action Plan. As you know, the WPA Action Plan for 2020-2023 defines emerging needs and priorities from a worldwide perspective. Looking at the global situation, only a minority of people with mental disorder receive any treatment. There is an outstanding need to improve access to high quality mental health care in all countries and to support psychiatrists and other mental health professionals in their important roles as policy makers, direct service providers, trainers and supporters of health care workers in primary and community health care systems.

The key goals of the Action Plan are as follows:

- *To promote psychiatry as a medical specialty in clinical, academic and research areas and to promote public mental health as a guiding principle.*
- *To highlight the specific role of psychiatrists in working with other professionals in health, public health, legal and social aspects of care*
- *To ensure WPA's positive engagement with member societies and WPA components, mental health professionals and general health care workers*

The 2020-2023 Action Plan also looks at targeted areas that need attention with input from various WPA components during the next triennium. It will work within an international perspective focusing specifically on improving coverage of interventions to treat mental disorder, prevent mental disorder and to promote mental wellbeing including through relevant training of mental health and other professionals. This Action Plan will also build on the 2017-2020 Action Plan to ensure continuity in the WPA's work.

The six areas of the WPA Action Plan 2020-23 include:

- **Public Mental Health:** Population approach to mental health to sustainably reduce mental disorder and promote mental wellbeing by improving coverage of effective interventions to treat mental disorder, prevent associated impacts, prevent mental disorder and promote mental wellbeing
- **Child, Adolescent & Youth Mental Health:** Improving coverage of public mental health intervention including for higher risk groups

such as those with learning disability, Autism, Early onset of psychosis and refugees

- Addressing co-morbidity in mental health: Training, capacity building and engagement with other mental health professionals
- Developing partnerships for joint collaborative work and strengthening partnerships with mental health and other organisations
- Continuation and completion of previous Action Plans

All the areas covered in the Action Plan are of high priority. However, due to time limitations and scarcity of resources, there will be greater focus on specific areas. The WPA has established working groups that have started formulating plans and pilot projects in different areas of the plan and once the findings of these pilot projects are available, we will share these reports and seek funding to implement these ideas in different settings and countries. I am mindful that the rapid spread of COVID-19 around the world is further increasing risk of developing mental disorder, relapse of existing mental disorder and poor mental wellbeing which requires action at a population level.

It is hoped that the 2020-23 will set new directions for all WPA components to develop guidelines and directions for future work. I rely on your dedication and support and look forward working with the Council, Board, WPA components and Member Societies during the next three years.

Long live the WPA and I look forward to receiving support, active input, and advice from our membership in setting these priorities and making a real difference in mental health.

Dr Afzal Javed
President

World Psychiatric Association

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