

## The WPA Action Plan 2017-2020

The WPA Action Plan 2017-2020 sets out a strategy for expanding the contribution of psychiatry to improved mental health for people across the globe. It is based on consultation within the WPA and with potential partner organizations as well as on the work that has preceded it. It builds on the strong capacity of the WPA to promote mental health and improve equitable access and quality of mental health care. In doing so, the plan provides a targeted strategy for reaching people, particularly young people, who face adversity and disadvantage.

Three characteristics frame the *strategic intent* of the Action Plan: continuation of WPA's contribution to developing the profession of psychiatry; development of operational work that focuses on critical mental health topics; attraction of new investment to support this work.

This intent is translated into action through a *strategic framework* based on three dimensions:

- Impact on population groups – strengthening the contribution of psychiatrists to reducing distress, illness and suicidal behaviour among vulnerable populations. Three specific populations include women and girls facing adversity<sup>1</sup>; people under extreme stress, including those affected by conflict and emergencies; and people living with long-standing mental illnesses and their caregivers.
- Enabling activities – supporting psychiatrists to promote mental health and improve care capacity. These activities include: service development; awareness raising and advocacy; education, publications and research. All are conceived as gender- and culturally-sensitive.
- Partnerships and collaboration – expanding the reach and effectiveness of partnerships with service providers, service beneficiaries and policy makers.

In focusing on *specific population groups*, the plan calls attention to the needs and strengths of children and

young people, who are prominent in each of the groups identified. Mental health promotion as well as prevention and treatment of mental illness are all incorporated into the plan. Three types of actions are anticipated. The first is support for sharing of best practice. The second is building capacity for the profession to work effectively in specific settings of disadvantage. The third is encouraging psychiatrists and other health professionals to use their expertise in facilitating the mental health work of non-specialists across a range of community settings.

The *enabling activities* find expression in a series of projects. The projects include:

- Strengthening the contribution of psychiatrists to improving mental health capacity in health systems. This entails training and support for psychiatrists to work effectively with other health and community cadres in primary care and community-based mental health systems.
- Facilitating a working group of organizations and people to develop initiatives on suicide prevention. The work will take into account the key World Health Organization (WHO) initiative Preventing Suicide: A Community Engagement Toolkit. The purpose will be to focus on the sharing of knowledge and practice, especially as it relates to the needs of young women and men in low-income countries.
- Developing publications, resources and educational programs on the subject of human rights and psychiatry. The Association will seek to inform debate especially in the context of ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It will foster professional advancement in topical areas such as intimate partner violence, through education and advocacy for policy and practice changes. With the help of Member Societies, it aims to monitor and assist the use of the new online WPA Competency-Based Curriculum for Mental

Health Providers on Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Against Women, including the development and delivery of undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing education curricula.

- Seeking partners to establish a multidisciplinary group, including psychiatrists and journalists, to foster good practice in the reporting of mental health and related topics in conflict and disaster situations.
- Working with journals and other publications in low- and middle-income countries. The WPA proposes re-establishing a task force on peer support for editors of psychiatric journals in low- and middle-income countries<sup>2-6</sup>. This initiative will enable editors who work in low resource and isolated situations to draw on support for their activities and to contribute to the work of others.
- Collecting information on psychiatrists' demographic characteristics, training and practice, which is crucial for WPA to achieve its aims, for access to psychiatrists to be improved and for the profession to identify opportunities to collaborate. We propose to conduct a survey of psychiatrists globally through our Member Societies to create a report on these topics.

The third dimension of the strategy, *partnerships and collaboration*, addresses service beneficiaries including service users, their families, and their communities; primary health care professionals; and a range of governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations. All of the above projects encourage and support collaborations of this type, as better collaboration underlies all effective activities. In particular:

- The plan proposes advancing and sharing knowledge about best practice in working with service users and their carers. It proposes operational activities to implement the recommendations of the WPA Task Force on Best Practice in Working with Service Users and Family

Carers<sup>7</sup> at a local level, and monitoring and evaluation to draw out the significant lessons and support dissemination of the findings.

- The plan supports increased collaboration with primary health care professionals, and partnerships with relevant organizations.
- The plan proposes building on the strength of the formal relationship of the WPA with the WHO by a Collaborative Action Plan to advance the goals common to the two organizations.
- The plan will initiate a program to strengthen the contribution and availability of psychiatrists in national and international responses to conflict and humanitarian emergencies. The program will train and support psychiatrists to perform their roles in emergency responses alongside other humanitarian actors. It will draw on the

past experiences of joint WPA-WHO training for disaster response<sup>8</sup> as well as of leading international non-governmental organizations.

In order to achieve its aims, the WPA will mobilize the professionals, knowledge and resources available to the Association. We will encourage the participation of Member Societies and individual psychiatrists in the themes and activities described. Many organizations have been working for extended periods of time to address the global mental health needs that also concern us. Working together in a clear and strategic manner will allow us to serve vulnerable populations globally in a better way.

The activities set forward by this Action Plan are designed to be attractive to new funders and investors. They provide opportunities to have an impact on

needs that are priorities for human and social development globally.

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## WPA Secretariat: playing a dynamic role

The WPA was established in 1950 as a non-profit organization. It functions in compliance with the Swiss Civil Law and its registered office is in Geneva, Switzerland. The WPA Secretariat started functioning at the Geneva University Psychiatric Hospital “Belle Idée” since 2005, when J. Cox was the Secretary General. This followed an “accord of collaboration” which was signed in September 2004 by the then WPA President A. Okasha on behalf of WPA and the Dean of the Geneva University Hospital<sup>1</sup>.

English is the working language of the Association. WPA statutes provide that other languages (including Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish) may be used in official matters depending on specific needs and circumstances. The English text of the Association’s statutes, by-laws and manual of procedures is used for WPA administration. The WPA logo consists of a representation of the Greek letter *psi* and the earth globe in crimson red. The logo may be supplemented by the name of the Association in English or any other language.

The WPA Secretary General is in charge of the WPA Secretariat and is responsible for the administrative tasks of the Association. The basic goal of the Secretariat is to facilitate the administrative functioning of the WPA to achieve the purposes prescribed by the statutes as well as the policies and guidelines approved by the General Assembly, the Executive Committee and the Board. The Secretary General works closely with the interim chief executive officer and deputy administrator, in consultation with the President and the Executive Committee, whenever required.

The Secretariat ensures good communication and collaboration with all WPA components and provides administrative and institutional services to the various categories of WPA membership, including Member Societies, Affiliated Associations and Individual Members. Services encompass admission procedures, distribution of institutional information, facilitation of access to and interaction with WPA governing bodies and of participation in various institutional activities.

The WPA Secretary General coordinates the work of WPA Zonal Representatives

and serves as liaison between them and the WPA governing bodies, and through the Secretariat coordinates and supports their work through various modes of communication. They in turn collaborate with the Secretariat in stimulating the activities of Member Societies in their respective Zones. The Secretariat also supports the work of members of the Executive Committee, Standing and Operational Committees, Task Forces, Scientific Sections, the Board and the Council. The organizational work related to the General Assembly, being held every three years, is a further major responsibility of the Secretary General and the Secretariat.

Liaison with the Geneva University Psychiatric Hospital, the World Health Organization and other international organizations is also one of the functions of the Secretariat. It also coordinates the provision of legal services to the WPA, including yearly reports to authorities in Switzerland. Furthermore, it holds the archives of the Association.

The WPA Executive Committee, chaired by President D. Bhugra, met at the Secretariat on July 17, 2016 and discussed various Association matters<sup>2-11</sup>. The Planning