

the Field of Mental Health - Kazakhstan (in WPA Zone 10 - Eastern Europe); and the Society of Psychiatrists, Narcologists, Psychotherapists and Clinical Psychologists of the Republic of Moldova (in WPA Zone 9 - Central Europe). We have now a total of 144 Member Societies (including four *ad-hoc*), which is at the top among all medical associations worldwide.

We have been supporting the work of the WPA Board, consisting of 18 Zonal Representatives from all regions of the world. The WPA Secretary General and the Secretariat maintain close liaison with this Board. The Zonal Representatives have the advantage of first-hand knowledge of the happenings related to mental health in the countries under their jurisdiction. They in turn relate these concerns to the President and the Executive Committee through the Secretary General and the Secretariat, leading to timely action.

We have been facilitating the activities of the 70 WPA Scientific Sections, which since their inception have been WPA's scientific backbone, affording depth and continuity to our global Association⁷. These Sections cover practically every aspect of psychiatry, bringing together psychiatrists from across the world and their expertise in relevant disciplines. Their work is coordinated by the WPA Secretary for Sections, and the Secretariat provides all necessary logistical support.

The re-designed WPA website (www.wpanet.org) is now more dynamic and interactive than ever⁶. It has gone live since May 2019 and has now a number of features that make it a tool which is useful and user friendly. The largest number of visitors to our site are seeking information on meetings and publications, especially *World Psychiatry*. The website provides the most

up-to-date information on our finger tips. With the help of the WPA Secretary for Education, we are trying to ensure that all our educational resources are accessible via one central point⁸.

In the wake of the recent pandemic, we have created a section on COVID-19 Mental Health Resources on our website. This provides resources from trusted partners, reputed journals, collaborative initiatives (webinars), and from WPA Sections and working groups.

We have been contributing to the refinement of WPA normative instruments in an orderly manner, for their review and approval by the proper WPA bodies. The new and revised Manual of Procedures, approved by the Executive Committee, has been made available.

Governance responsibility is entrusted with the Secretary General, who ensures that the Secretariat properly supports the work of the WPA and its Executive Committee. The Secretary General acts as the liaison between the WPA Board and Committees, and ensures that Member Societies are kept informed of any discussions and decisions. The Secretary General also seeks the advice of the WPA Council when appropriate.

Concerning administration, a new filing system has been put in place at the Secretariat, with two entries for WPA documents: one to be accessed by WPA components with appropriate password, and the other to be accessed by Secretariat staff. Other innovations have been the preparation and documentation of various policies approved by the Executive Committee, the creation of a WPA privacy policy, a new WPA logo, procedures for regional and thematic meetings, procedures for applying to WPA co-sponsorships and continuing

education credits, administrative support for the various Task Forces and Standing Committees, and maintenance of service during COVID-19 lockdown.

F. Sotgiu was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer in December 2017. Leading the work of the Secretariat, she liaises closely with the Executive Committee, in particular the Secretary General and the President, whilst also managing two administrative staff. She is responsible for all day-to-day activities of the Secretariat, including management of the Association's finances, legal and human resource requirements. Let me appreciate her excellent work for the WPA.

Thus, the WPA Secretariat has been performing its primary objective of strengthening the WPA, although working within administrative and financial constraints. This mission could not have been accomplished without the dynamic leadership of WPA President H. Herrman. We are also obliged to the WPA President-Elect A. Javed, and the members the Executive Committee, Council and Board for their guidance. Above all, we thank the WPA Member Societies for their constant support and co-operation. Together, and finding strength in our unity, the WPA will march ahead!

Roy Abraham Kallivayalil
WPA Secretary General

1. Herrman H. *World Psychiatry* 2018;17:236-7.
2. Herrman H. *World Psychiatry* 2019;18:113-4.
3. Herrman H. *World Psychiatry* 2019;18:368-9.
4. Kallivayalil RA. *World Psychiatry* 2018;17:238-9.
5. Kallivayalil RA. *World Psychiatry* 2019;18:239.
6. Kallivayalil RA. *World Psychiatry* 2020;19:124.
7. Schulze TG. *World Psychiatry* 2018;17:373-4.
8. Ng RMK. *World Psychiatry* 2018;17:374-5.

DOI:10.1002/wps.20788

WPA Scientific Sections: a strengthened backbone for the 2020-2023 triennium

At the beginning of his six-year term, the WPA Secretary for Scientific Sections laid out a work plan¹ comprised of the following main goals: a) improve and streamline communication between the

Sections and facilitate research and publication projects; b) continue and expand the WPA's intersectional activities; c) leverage the Sections' experiences and resources to further WPA's activities for early

career psychiatrists; d) promote gender equity at all levels of Sections and their activities; e) establish cross-country peer networks of researchers to facilitate and share access to knowledge, resources and

strategies to publish successfully; and f) establish truly authentic and compassionate relationships with organizations representing patients and caregivers.

The implementation of these goals is meant to strengthen the Sections as the backbone of the Association and thus to enable the WPA to forcefully fulfill its triennial Action Plans, to swiftly react to challenges to global psychiatry, and to communicate its mission not only to the psychiatric community but to society at large.

Since a powerful information technology infrastructure is a prerequisite for an umbrella association of 140 national psychiatric societies to meet the demands of today's world, the Secretary for Sections has established a flexible online meeting platform in order to communicate with the Sections, and for the Sections to communicate with each other. For the past two years now, the Secretary has held online videoconferences with the leaderships of the various Sections about every three months. Participation ranges from 10 to 30 Sections. The time slots are rotated so as to accommodate for different time zones, regional and religious holidays.

While being a simple tool, the introduction of this platform has tremendously propelled cross-talk between Sections. It has been instrumental in increasing the number of intersectional activities at WPA congresses and meetings, such as symposia, workshops, and panel discussions. It has furthermore contributed to a more prominent role of the Sections in the program committees of the WPA's signature World Congress of Psychiatry, with Section members now making up more than a third of program committee members, being balanced for geographic diversity.

This heightened visibility and level of engagement of the Sections has greatly contributed to the shaping of a novel signature initiative of the WPA: the Education, Science, Publication, and Research Initiative (ESPRI)². ESPRI is dedicated to jump-starting innovative and promising programs in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). The WPA will award \$15,000 USD to three projects (\$5,000 USD per project) per year. These funds should be matched with funds that the applicants have been able to secure through other na-

tional and/or international organizations, including academia, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and/or industry.

The first project to be awarded seed funding through the ESPRI mechanism, which was jointly developed with the Secretaries for Education and Publications, focuses on training mental health professionals in diagnosis and reporting of trauma related to torture and persecution in people from Syria and other countries of the Middle East and North Africa region. This project is being spearheaded by the Section on Psychological Consequences of Torture and Persecution.

This Section, in close collaboration with that on Psychotherapy, was furthermore instrumental in bringing a strong WPA component and thinking to a conference on psychotraumatology at the University of Duhok, Kurdistan (June 23-24, 2019), which in turn inspired a publication collaboration between the WPA and the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, resulting in a special issue on "Bringing the toll of disasters and trauma on mental health to the forefront of psychiatric discussion"³.

The beginning of the next WPA triennium (2020-2023) will be marked by a thematic congress on "Psychological trauma: global burden on mental and physical health", taking place in Athens on December 11-13, 2020, conceptualized as an entirely intersectional meeting (www.wpathematic.org).

The interaction between the Secretary and the Early Career Psychiatrists (ECP) Section has proven to be very fruitful, and has helped shape a signature ECP project, the ECP Exchange Programme, which will allow early career psychiatrists to acquire intercultural competencies, and gain awareness of different expressions of illnesses and available treatments across the world⁴. The Secretary is now working together with ECP members to actively contribute to and shape WPA's social media presence. The Section on History of Psychiatry has recently seen a major influx of early career psychiatrists and has become a very active and diverse Section under a new leadership, demonstrating that the history of our field is a dynamic process.

In addition to the ones discussed above,

the Secretary would like to briefly point the reader to the recent activities (e.g., large-scale book projects, development of guidelines, congresses, active involvement with various NGOs) of the Sections on Disaster Psychiatry; Evidence-based Psychiatry; Exercise and Sports Psychiatry; Family Research and Intervention; Immunology and Psychiatry; Interdisciplinary Collaboration; Medicine, Psychiatry and Primary Care; Neuroimaging in Psychiatry; Old Age Psychiatry; Pharmacopsychiatry; Philosophy and Humanities; Positive Psychiatry; Preventive Psychiatry; Stigma and Mental Illness; Urban Mental Health; and Women's Mental Health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be a major challenge to psychiatrists and psychiatric services around the globe, underscoring WPA's role for guidance in these trying times⁵. The WPA has risen to the occasion and launched a web resource providing important information to mental health specialists worldwide, which is continuously updated and offers latest state-of-the-art educational material in various languages (www.wpanet.org/covid-19-resources). Sections have been crucial in gathering, collating, reviewing and adapting the various pieces of information.

The ongoing implementation of new, powerful information technology infrastructure, with a newly designed web presence, will greatly benefit the Sections' active participation in WPA's educational and research activities over the next triennium. Sections are encouraged to share their work with the mental health community on WPA's news section on its website (www.wpanet.org/news).

The Secretary's focus over the next three years will lie in making sure that Sections are at the forefront of bringing diversity to the everyday work of WPA. Furthermore, helping members from Sections, in particular from LMIC, to be actively involved in research projects and grant applications will be another major objective of the Secretary's agenda. Finally, the Sections will be encouraged to dedicate a major part of their work to the integration of service users and carers⁶.

In summary, over the past three years, the WPA Scientific Sections have shown that they are essential to implementing

WPA's Action Plan⁷; that they are the glue between clinicians, researchers and policy makers; and that they continuously strengthen the bond that connects psychiatrists from every corner of the world to each other and to our common goal, that is promoting mental health and well-being as a human right^{8,9}.

Thomas G. Schulze

WPA Secretary for Scientific Sections

1. Schulze TG. *World Psychiatry* 2018;17:373-4.
2. Schulze TG. *World Psychiatry* 2020;19:123-4.
3. Schulze T, Botbol M, Kizilhan J. *Br J Psychiatry* 2020;216:A11-2.
4. Pinto da Costa M. *World Psychiatry* 2020;19:127-8.
5. Kaufman KR, Petkova E, Bhui KS et al. *BJPsych*

Open 2020;6:e48.

6. Herrman H. *World Psychiatry* 2019;18:113-4.
7. Herrman H. *World Psychiatry* 2018;17:236-7.
8. Herrman H. *World Psychiatry* 2019;18:368-9.
9. Campion J, Javed A, Vaishnav M et al. *Indian J Psychiatry* 2020;62:3-6.

DOI:10.1002/wps.20789

WPA activities in the field of publications during the 2017-2020 triennium

During the triennium which is coming to an end, as in the previous ones, the WPA publications were largely dominated by the importance of *World Psychiatry*, its official journal. The influence of this journal has grown enormously since its launch by Mario Maj at the beginning of his term as WPA Secretary for Scientific Publications, in 2002.

Supporting him in his task as Editor of the WPA publications' flagship and in his efforts to lead this journal towards scientific excellence has, since that date, been one of the first priorities of the WPA Action Plans¹ and of its Secretaries for Scientific Publications². To this end, this last triennium focused on an area which we think to be useful: the promotion of *World Psychiatry's* global dissemination by supporting (or reactivating), as much as possible, its translations in various languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish).

This does not mean, of course, that the WPA calls into question the role of English as the current dominant language of science (among other fields), but that it considers one of its duties to reduce, as much as possible, the obstacle that this linguistic dominance generates to many of our colleagues in the world who do not feel comfortable enough with English. Some of the translations of the journal are being produced regularly (in particular, the Spanish and Russian ones). For others, based essentially on the voluntary commitment of actors from Member Societies, the WPA is looking for a way to increase their sustainability.

Considering that, for an organization as

international as ours, linguistic diversity is indeed a concern, translation issues have to be considered as well in other types of publications, including books and Internet resources. This question remains to be addressed properly by our organization, but we see some promise in the fact that, based once again on the voluntary efforts of actors from its Member Societies, the WPA has fostered the translation in Russian of various books of its successful Anthology Series: those focusing on German psychiatry, French psychiatry and Russian psychiatry.

Concerning the Internet, we recently took advantage of the renewal of the WPA website³ to include documents in languages other than English in the resources it offers. A first step was taken recently with the integration of documents in French among those included in the COVID-19 section of the website. The idea of using more systematically in our website the linguistic flexibility of new technology is still to be discussed more thoroughly by our governance. However, we know already that it would certainly boost the use of our website, helping it to become, more and more, a first line channel to provide reliable global resources to the psychiatric community and its partners. The COVID-19 crisis is showing us that this would be particularly helpful for hot or controversial topics, in an era in which they can so easily be contaminated by rumors and fake news.

Another important pending issue of WPA publications is the complexity of their objectives. Beside disseminating, as widely as possible, the scientific ad-

vances and recognized good practices in psychiatry, a task so successfully ensured by *World Psychiatry*, the Secretary for Scientific Publications' Action Plan² proposed to implement initiatives to address the global inequalities in research visibility and dissemination. Indeed, we believe that it is a duty for the WPA to provide psychiatrists who are less favored by their context with greater opportunities to have their work published and acknowledged. We have to be aware that this problem affects not only researchers from low- and middle-income countries, but also promising colleagues who, even if they work in well-resourced countries, do not do so in contexts that favor regular publications.

In that sense, WPA is a scientific association different from any other. We think that its aim should not be limited to the promotion of scientific excellence, but include as well the support to research and publications in least favored contexts, whatever the reasons of this disadvantage, either "external" (economic, linguistic, cultural or political) or "internal" (related to the topics addressed, which, in spite of their relevance for psychiatric practice, may sometimes be less likely to be published in high impact journals)².

In line with this concern, another objective in this triennium has been the diversification of the WPA publications offer. Given that papers in indexed journals whose language is English are currently the best and most agile way for disseminating the results of scientifically valuable research, of various levels, the WPA launched a project of regular co-sponsored thematic issues in global or regional psychiatric jour-