



WHO

World Health Organization

Topic: Ensure the progress of mental health organizations by pursuing more effective and innovative strategies informed by research and data



Committee: World Health Organization (WHO)

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I. Committee Background

During the establishment of the United Nations, representatives from Brazil and China proposed creating an international organization to oversee global health. This vision led to the creation of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948, with the mission to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable. As the leading authority on global health, WHO coordinates international health efforts, guides health policy, and spearheads responses to health crises.

Among WHO's many achievements are the establishment of the first global disease surveillance system, the promotion of antibiotic development in the 1950s, the creation of the International Health Regulations in 1969, and the successful eradication of smallpox in 1980. In recent decades, WHO has continued to address emerging global health challenges, including combating drug resistance, improving access to health products, and advancing treatment for mental health disorders.

II. Topic Information

Mental health is fundamental to overall well-being, yet the global response to mental health needs has historically been insufficient. In response, WHO launched as part of the 2013–2030 action plan Comprehensive Mental



Health Action Plan extended strategy to promote mental health through more effective and innovative strategies informed by research and data.

The World Mental Health Report highlights the importance of using data and good practices to bring about change, urging countries to improve their mental health services, environments, and care systems. Despite the potential innovation, the mental health field faces significant challenges. Macro-level theories often fail to address local barriers, and mental health systems remain underfunded or underdeveloped in many regions.

Adopting and integrating innovations in mental health services—whether through national healthcare systems or community-based initiatives—is crucial to creating sustainable improvements. As seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, telemedicine and digital tools have transformed how mental health services are delivered, particularly in underserved communities.

a. History of the Topic

The treatment and perception of mental illness have evolved significantly over the centuries. Early views of mental illness were often rooted in superstition, leading to inhumane practices, particularly in asylums during the 18th and 19th centuries. A shift toward medical understanding emerged in the early 20th century, with psychoanalysis and later psychopharmacological treatments becoming central to mental health care.

The Community Mental Health Movement of the 1960s and 1970s marked a turning point, advocating for deinstitutionalization and the development of community-based mental health services. Legislation such as the American Community Mental Health Act provided frameworks for access to care at the local level.

By the 1980s and 1990s, the emphasis shifted toward evidence-based practices, where research was increasingly used to guide treatment strategies



and assess outcomes. WHO's Mental Health Action Plan (2013–2020) further underscored the importance of a global, evidence-based approach to improving mental health care. This plan, extended to 2030, continues to shape the international response to mental health challenges.

Today, mental health care is increasingly integrated into primary healthcare systems. Innovations such as telemedicine, digital mental health platforms, and community-based services have gained momentum, offering new ways to deliver care. This trend was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, which underscored the need for accessible mental health services. Modern mental health organizations prioritize holistic care, considering the social determinants of health, and emphasize the need for equity, inclusion, and evidence-based policies.

b. Current Issues

Some major challenges hinder progress in mental health care: stigma, inefficiency in service delivery, the lack of resources, and underfunding in mental health systems.

- Stigma continues to be a pervasive barrier to seeking care, affecting individuals with mental illness, their families, and even healthcare providers. This stigma often leads to discrimination and marginalization, making it difficult for people to access the care they need. To address this, innovative strategies—such as mental health education campaigns, cultural competency training, family engagement programs, and awareness initiatives targeting healthcare professionals—are essential. Policy changes are also necessary to combat structural stigma and encourage a more inclusive approach to mental health.
- Inefficiency in service delivery poses another significant challenge. Traditional models of therapy often require more resources than are available, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Rather than



focusing solely on the development of new treatments, it is crucial to optimize and reorganize existing resources. By applying existing knowledge more efficiently—such as task-shifting to non-specialist health workers or expanding the use of digital mental health tools—services can be delivered more effectively, bridging the gap between demand and available care. To ensure the progress of mental health organizations, it is essential to develop strategies that address both stigma and inefficiency, using evidence-based and innovative approaches that draw on research and data.

- Lack of resources poses a barrier to advancements in healthcare by restricting service accessibility and reducing care quality while hindering preventive measures as well. Inadequate funding results in a scarcity of facilities and professionals leading to waiting periods and overwhelmed staff members. Factors that could compromise the efficacy of treatments. Furthermore, the absence of investment in awareness perpetuates the stigma surrounding health issues which discourages individuals from seeking assistance. Lack of backing for research and collaboration with other healthcare sectors hampers the progress of developing new treatments and comprehensive approaches. Improving health care outcomes hinges on strategically allocating resources.
- Underfunding in mental health systems limits access to services, diminishes the quality of care, and hinders preventive measures. With fewer resources available, there are not enough facilities and providers, which leads to longer wait times and hurried appointments that can compromise the effectiveness of treatment. Moreover, a lack of funding for awareness campaigns continues to foster stigma, making individuals less likely to seek help. This financial shortfall also hampers research and innovation, slowing down the development of new treatments. Additionally, underfunding can lead to poor integration of mental health services with general healthcare,



limiting comprehensive care options. It is essential to address these funding gaps to enhance access, quality, and outcomes in mental health care.

c. Bloc Positions

Countries around the world are working to address mental health challenges, although the extent of these challenges and the resources available vary greatly:

- **Australia:** Mental health is a national priority, with programs focusing on reducing high rates of morbidity, particularly among Indigenous populations. The national mental health program funds community services and outreach initiatives.
- **Canada:** Canada integrates mental health into its overall healthcare strategy and works to reduce disparities in access through significant investments. The Canadian Mental Health Survey helps inform policies that promote equity in care.
- **India:** India faces significant mental health challenges, including stigma and limited resources. The Mental Health Care Act of 2017 ensures the right to access mental health care, while NGOs work to raise awareness and improve treatment access.
- **Germany:** With a strong social welfare system, Germany invests in mental health research and community-based programs, addressing the needs of an aging population and improving service quality and accessibility.
- **Japan:** In response to high suicide rates, Japan has launched initiatives to improve workplace mental health and increase access to mental health services.
- **Brazil:** Brazil prioritizes mental health within its public health system, addressing stigma and human rights through psychosocial care networks that provide community-based care.



III. Conclusion

Mental health affects millions of individuals worldwide, impacting families, communities, and societies. Despite growing awareness, stigma, and a lack of access to adequate care remain significant barriers for many. Tackling these challenges requires a collective effort to change the course of mental health history. By prioritizing mental health as a universal human right, we can build a future where everyone has access to the care and support they need.

IV. Essential Questions

1. What steps can delegations take to ensure equitable access to mental health services for all citizens, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic location?
2. How can delegations promote the effective use of data and research to inform mental health policy and practice?
3. What innovative approaches, such as telemedicine, can be used to improve mental health outcomes in underserved communities?
4. How can delegations address the impact of social determinants of health on mental health in their countries?
5. What actions can delegations take to reduce mental health stigma and promote awareness and support?
6. How can delegations collaborate with other countries and the private sector to strengthen the global mental health strategy?



V. References

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