



WASP NEWSLETTER FEB 2022

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Editorial

Social Connectedness and mental health in a Digitalized world



Digital revolution especially in the last two decades has brought the world closer by improving communication. We can connect with people in remote corners of the world with ease, which was not relatively convenient till a few years back. Covid-19 pandemic has provided a push to interactions through the digital media. It has made virtual meetings with large groups popular than physical meetings in the context of fear of spread of infection.

Most universities and educational institutions including schools for lower grades had to resort to virtual classrooms. Work-from-home culture has become common all over the world. In the health sector, telemedicine has gained prominence in clinical practice. Persons with limited mobility due to old age or physical disability are able to connect with services and socialize with their loved ones without physical travel. Thus, the digitalized world has improved social connectedness.

But we also need to see the other side of the digital revolution. Has it really improved social connectedness without any negative consequences? Has it affected health, specifically mental health of the population? How has the mental health of the growing children been affected? What have been the adverse effects on the functioning of the families leading to increase in risk for mental health issues? How has the society been affected in general?

Easy availability of digital media has affected the growing children and family functioning in many ways. For a growing child, starting from infancy, physical closeness with mother and father, then face to face interactions with kins including siblings, schoolmates and friends are very important for developing bonding, relationships, and personality. Digital media tends to restrict all outdoor activities in the physical world. For a growing child, outdoor play with peers is equally important for a normal growth. Unfortunately, in the last two years, courtesy Covid-19, constraints have been put on the golden period of growing years of young children who are confined to virtual media both for education as well as play. Two other alarming consequences of digital revolution, which are unrelated to Covid-19, are use of digital devices/media in parenting and cyber bullying. An example of the former is switching on some cartoon film on a smart phone or tablet and putting the screen in child's visual field. The parent continues her work on another device or is socializing and the child is clung to the film. This has become a normative behaviour in many parts of the world. Cyber bullying is another consequence of the proliferation of virtual media and may lead to mental health issues in growing children. (contd...)

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Digitalization has affected the physical connectedness in the family and the society in general. It is not uncommon to see at home or in a social gathering, many people clinging to their smart phones, and often communicating with each other by texting each other even within the same room or hall. At home, people often would call on phone or message a family member sitting in another room rather than entering and speaking to the person. This is probably an extreme degree of maintaining personal privacy and has deleterious effects on social functioning. It may be considered fine to use virtual media for communication where it is not possible to have face to face physical communication due to distance factors, but resorting to it to avoid physical communication is likely to have harmful consequences especially for mental health in long run. Emotional bonding and warmth in interpersonal relationship in the family as well as in the society is important for mental health for which virtual media is not an appropriate alternative.

Advances in digitalization have improved social connectedness with a great service during the Covid-19 pandemic, where it acted as a boon to maintain communication when social isolation was recommended to control the spread of infection. However, excessive dependence on it is not going to be without harmful consequences for mental health and social functioning.

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Social connectedness! We need, but digital interactions have their limits



Man is a social animal. We all need social interactions, to discourse, share, get amused, express feelings, communicate needs, deliberate, liaison, and simply to exist. Social interactions vary with time, place, contexts, social networks, and moods. But social connectedness makes the world tick and individuals function. We need social connectedness more when we are hurting, physically or psychologically, or both. We need people to be in touch with to share feelings, experiences, opinions, and even to establish and express authority. The necessity of social connectedness is brought to the fore when we are deprived of it. The pandemic taught us a lesson!

The COVID 19 pandemic and the consequent lockdowns and quarantines highlighted the need we all had for social connectedness. Being confined in homes, we craved to meet people, both known and unknown! Not only to take a walk around, but also to talk with others in personal presence. Enjoyment is better in company than in solitude!

Digital technology has been of help, no doubt! Gone are the days of waiting for a telegram. You can directly see the other person whom you want to talk to directly through the phone, anytime of the day, anywhere in the world. Large gatherings have moved online, bringing distant people closer, virtually though.

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But does the social connectedness through the digital media serve the requisite purpose. Digital connectedness brings an element of impersonality. One can quit an interaction too very quickly, especially for text based interactions, citing another work, busy schedule and so on, masquerading the lack of intent to interact, social anxiety or indifference. Moreover, the ease of interactions has made the number of interactions one is subjected to immense, which can become overwhelming. Imagine an 'influencer' responding to each text or comment with the same cognitive effort, simply too difficult. Thus, the social interactions digitally has the risk of becoming facile and superficial, added with the responsibility of being largely politically, ethically, religiously, ethnically, gender-wise correct. The digital interactions are not forgiving, and the digital image or persona stays the same, even if you change. The social connectedness suffers at the expense of correctness of interactions. We are entering an age of too many friends, with whom we cannot share what friends could share.

Digital connectedness seems to be an inadequate replacement or alternate of physical social connectedness. Loneliness, or lack of social connectedness, is being recognized as an adverse determinant of mental health. As social psychiatrists, we need to be firstly cognizant of social connectedness (or lack of thereof), and potential efforts of harnessing it to improve mental health of communities. Moreover, we need to be cognizant the rising digital interactions, and the impact it is likely to have on the mental health of individuals and societies. 'Ghosting', modulating interactions based on social media profiles of the other individuals, jealousy towards accomplished lifestyles of others in the social circles (based on posted pics), hyper connectedness and need to be available digitally, all have their toll. There is probably a need to recognize the need for non-digital interactions as well and encourage the social interactions where the focus of attention is the present social group.

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Working Group on Coercion in Psychiatry



Members of the group have continued their respective clinical and academic practices over recent months during these difficult times. Members have presented to various forums, including the Chilean National Psychiatric Association, on various aspects of coercion in mental health care. A number of research projects are ongoing, and three members of the group (Louise Penzenstadler, Yasser Khazaal, and Andrew Molodynski) are writing a chapter for an exciting new WASP book looking at challenges for mental health care worldwide and aimed at a general audience

The ongoing pandemic has made the traditional ways of meeting and sharing ideas and information more difficult, but we hope in 2022 and onwards that things will open up a little and also that we can embrace technology to maintain our collaborations and work. The website has been updated with more papers and articles related to the practice and experience of coercion in various forms and locations. If anyone wants an issue, event, or publication highlighted please do let us know using the link in the website or may email address.

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Report from the Canadian Association of Social Psychiatry



I am very grateful to the CASP Executive Committee, CASP Presidential Advisors, and the CASP Board of Directors for their enthusiastic support in re-establishing CASP in 2019. CASP had a very auspicious re-establishment in 2019 and a robust presence at the WASP World Congress in Bucharest, Romania, and has continued to be actively involved in CASP, WASP, and WPA meetings and publications, as outlined below.

When our Vice-President, Manon Charbonneau, resigned from her position in 2021, I thanked her for her contributions to CASP and struck a Nominations and Elections Committee led by CASP Past Vice-President Luc Morin of Quebec along with Renata Villela of Ontario and Martine Dériger, CASP Executive Director, to nominate a new Vice-President. K Sonu Gaïnd of Toronto, Ontario, was confirmed as our new CASP Vice-President and President-Elect. Upon taking up this new role, Sonu gave up his position as Presidential Advisor.

As we have done in the past, CASP will hold its annual meeting this year during the Canadian Psychiatric Association's (CPA) Annual Conference which will take place in Toronto, Ontario in October 2022, where we have also submitted a CASP-sponsored symposium on social psychiatry.

Both CASP and WASP Executive Committees function by a triennium term. CASP's first triennium (2019-22) ends this year and elections will be held in Spring-Summer with a slate of candidates for CASP officers. I will be ending my triennium as CASP Founding President this year and moving on to the presidency of WASP after the 24th World Congress and General Assembly in November 2022.

CASP Meetings

2019:

Re-establishment of CASP, with the creation of the Board of Directors, Election of the Executive Committee, and CASP By-Laws; First Meeting of the CASP Executive at the WASP 23rd World Congress in Bucharest, Romania; CASP President Vincenzo Di Nicola was elected WASP President-Elect (2019-2022); CASP made a successful bid to bring the 25th WASP World Congress to Montreal in 2025.

2022:

CASP Annual Meeting at the Canadian Psychiatric Association (CPA) Annual Conference, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, October 2022

Vincenzo Di Nicola

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Religion in the Current Socio-political Context - Role of Social Scientists



There is an urgent need for social psychiatrists to understand and suggest solutions to the religious conflicts in the current socio-political context. Firstly, we must examine, without pride and prejudice, different religions. One cannot see any one of the world's religions as superior to any other religion. Each religion has its own particular genius and its own flaws.

NEED TO STUDY THE PHENOMENA OF RELIGIOUS RADICALISM

Most analysts and social scientists point to creating narratives against those of the radicals. These measures must commence with clergy, who probably holds the key to the future of ideological thinking within the community and relations with the other faiths. The clergy is most significant in a community where religious education is considered sacrosanct. The contribution of social psychiatry in such attempts would be through the inputs, in understanding the dynamics of 'Pride' and group conflict. This can be done by interaction and understanding group dynamics.

OTHER INTERVENTIONAL METHODS

Empathy training - For child development, empathetic parents will also instil an acceptance of those who are different and a global identification with all people to supplement one's "tribal" identity in schools. For self-esteem, as much as possible, the achievement of basic physical needs, safety, security and the opportunity for self-actualisation for all in societies. For hate crimes, effective legal punishment. For media, policies to reduce dangerously, hate crimes reinforcement, and effective recommendations. For political leadership, strategies for the modelling of bringing diverse groups for politicised, its danger escalates. For community relationships, both individuals and groups, intermittent and ongoing cross-cultural interactions that challenge scapegoating of the other on both sides. For victims of hate crimes, opportunities to therapeutically process their trauma and fears.

CONCLUSION

Peace is a mutual matter of concern for every individual and for Governments. As rational citizens in pursuit of a rational end, WASP should take the initiative and make efforts to set up a task force to address this issue and collaborate with various religious organisations, NGOs and government agencies.

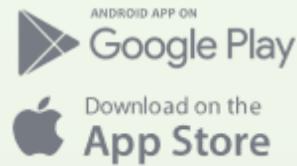
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News from Member Societies

News from Russia

MOBILE APP "ANTI-ALARM"



On October 20, 2021, the Mental Health Union of Russia, together with the Union of Effective Psychologists, released a new application for reducing anxiety "AntiAnxiety", which continues the line of self-help mobile applications: AntiPanic Lite, AntiPanic Pro, AntiDepression.

The apps have been downloaded over 300,000 times by iOS and Android platform users. Clients and specialists note an increase in the effectiveness of drug therapy and psychotherapy in combination with the use of mobile applications of this line.

Anti-Anxiety consists of a theoretical part in the form of a cartoon, a diagnostic test, and a set of practical exercises to reduce the level of anxiety, which includes techniques from various psychological areas that work with anxiety. This diversity allows each user to find the best set of techniques for themselves and cope with anxiety.

The President Natalia Treushnikova noted that the development of the self-help mobile application program is one of the priorities for the Union of Mental Health of Russia: "Due to recent world events, the level of anxiety among the population is constantly growing. We try to provide as many people as possible with accessible information about mental health and try to help cope with stress in the current epidemiological situation. Developed by professional psychologists and psychiatrists and based on state-of-the-art methodologies with proven effectiveness, mobile applications provide an opportunity for a huge number of people to have non-drug options at their fingertips to help cope with anxiety, panic attacks and depression. Our developments have attracted the interest of professional communities in other countries, and I can state that this is undoubtedly a successful integration of modern technologies into professional psychological assistance, and we will continue to develop in this area.

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Integrative Community Therapy: Creating Social Connectedness in a Pandemic

Brazil and the world have been going through collective catastrophes. This provokes psychosocial consequences that affects both the individual and his social bonds, compromising the mental health of society. It accounts for a precarious social, economic, psychological and physical existence. How to intervene in contexts of isolation and the breakup of social bonds? In Brazil, we created a psychosocial intervention we call Integrative Community Therapy. It is public space where everyone can voice their suffering, as well as find psychological support. The group listens and resonates together, actively creating interpersonal bonds. During the pandemic, we started to offer it also online. Here are some goals: 1- to strengthen bonds and build support networks for people in social isolation, 2- to promote empathy and develop resiliency 3- a space to talk about the meaning of life, pain and suffering, thus creating meaningful existential encounters; 4- to offer a space of support for Health Professionals involved in fighting Covid-19. (contd...)

(...contd) The Brazilian Association of Social Psychiatry, The Department of Community Mental Health of WASP and the International Association of Integrative Community Therapy (ICT) built an alliance of 15 countries that started to offer daily rounds of online ICT. Along the last 2 years we have been offering a network of support and hope for people in isolation, helping them discover hidden resources to overcome life obstacles, being able to both transform and be transformed by these experiences. More than 30 thousand people have participated. We learned that pain and suffering are universal and that people in social isolation can support each other online.

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Urgent need for close watch on mental health of Tonga disaster victims.



On January 15 2022, Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha‘apai eruption and subsequent tsunami severely damaged the whole Tongatapu island, which is the main island of the Kingdom of Tonga and 70% of the population lives in. The massive tsunami caused widespread destruction over the island and the eruption released a huge amount of volcanic ash that accumulated 15 cm thick in the capital city, Nuku‘alofa. As the result, more than 84,000 people are affected and recovery from the disaster is expected to take an extended period. To make matters worse, 2 COVID-19 positive workers were detected at different wharfs that indicate these infections were acquired through the contact with the sailor of the ships carrying relief supplies, since Tonga had only one case with COVID-19 before the disaster. In response to this, Tonga government unavoidably enforced lockdown, which cause further delay in reconstruction activities.

Disasters have been shown to have a significant impact on both elements of physical and mental health of victims. For instance, increased number of patients with depression, PTSD and alcoholism was reported in the aftermath of the 2011 great east Japan earthquake and a number of the residents in the northeastern area of Japan are still facing prolonged psychological distress. To tackle with this issue, Japanese university psychiatrists have been making regular rounds at disaster sites in the northeastern coast of the main island of Japan. Although Tonga is known as a country with higher level of social capital that may be a protective factor for post-disaster mental illness, keeping a close watch on mental health of Tonga disaster victims is critically needed.

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News from Argentine Branch of WASP

I am writing you as President of the Argentina Branch of the World Association for Social Psychiatry WASP.

First of all, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate you on the organization of the WASP 2021 Hybrid Asia-Pacific Congress which was a grand success and for its scientific excellence. The theme of the Congress “Innovations in Social Psychiatry Across the World” was very important considering how social psychiatry helped in dealing with the mental health issues in the background of the Covid-19 pandemic

Secondly, with the purpose to let you know about the activity of the Argentina Branch of the WASP taking place in the current year.

The theme that the task force had chosen to address this year was to continue with the Uncertainty. Term that referred to the social, economic, political and cultural global situation and the Argentine in particular and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Focusing on the issue of Uncertainty it was helpful to the people in the community who attended, health professionals like us to develop strategies for coping with stress and building resilience and well-being.

On December 2, the third Conference of the Argentine Branch of the WASP of Buenos Aires, Argentina was held under the theme “Impact of the pandemic on the community. From Uncertainty to the Resignification”. It was conducted with the participation of excellent experts and with the assistance of people from the community. The conference was held in conjunction with the Argentine Psychosocial Medicine Association AMEPSA and its president, Dr. Silvia Melamedoff and the Section of the Argentine Association of Psychiatrists AAP called Psychiatry: Women in the 21st century.

The Argentine Branch of the WASP and AMEPSA also conducted during the current year, scientific meetings on topics such as vulnerability, stress, childhood and adolescence in Pandemic, older adults and pandemic, gender perspective in the context of a pandemic, and others. Conferences were all open to the community and free.

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Working Towards Mental health in an Unequal World

The theme for this year's World Mental Health Day on October 10, 2021 is "Mental health in an unequal world". And the WHO slogan is "Mental healthcare for all: let's make it a reality". This theme and the slogan have become even more appropriate as Covid19 pandemic has further worsened the rich- poor divide and 80-90% people in Low and Middle Income- LAMI Countries have no access to mental health care.

On WMH Day a grand event organised by the Dept of Psychiatry Pushpagiri Institute of Medical Sciences, Thiruvalla, Kerala, India in association with World Federation for Mental Health, WASP, Indian Medical Association and National Alliance for Mental Health- NAMH India. Delivering the keynote address Dr Roy Kallivayalil, President NAMH- India and Past President of WASP said Mental health issues and disorders are major public health challenges, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where chronic shortages in mental health services and human resources exist. The development of effective and accessible mental health systems in the world is an urgent priority. Mental health is one of the most neglected areas of health globally. This was true before COVID-19, but the pandemic has further worsened the status of mental health. There are several reasons why mental health has been ignored. The first one is an associated stigma. The second is a perception of mental health disorders as a luxury. The additional top reasons include a fragmented and outdated service model. Some of these include the provision of mental health services mainly in psychiatric hospitals, severe lack of preventative mental health service; lagging policy changes and also a shortage of human resources. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for equitable standards in mental health care. It has also highlighted the persistent social and structural inequities that contribute to poor mental health. The 2021 World Mental Health Day theme '**Mental Health in an Unequal World**' will enable us to focus on the issues that perpetuate mental health inequality locally and globally. Psychiatry and mental health are facing multiple challenges today. A paradigm shift in our policies and practice are required and we need fundamental changes in health care priorities.

Dr Liza Varghese, Joice Geo, Dr Elsheba Mathew, Fr Ritto Mathew and Prof Gaddam Vijayalaxmi also addressed the meeting. Representatives of families, carers, NGOs, medical students, PG residents and faculty actively participated

Roy Abraham Kallivayalil

Professor and Head, Department of Psychiatry
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President, World Association of Social Psychiatry (2016-2019)



Prof Roy Kallivayalil delivering the Keynote address at the World Mental Health Day Celebrations organised at Pushpagiri Thiruvalla, Kerala India in association with WFMH, WASP, Indian Medical Association and NAMH on Oct 10, 2021. Dr Liza Varghese, Joice Geo, Dr Elsheba Mathew, Fr Ritto Mathew and Prof Gaddam Vijayalaxmi who addressed the meeting are also seen.



Annual report:

Along with economical and corona restrictions we strengthened our ambition to be a forum for debate, dialogue and knowledge dissemination on social psychiatry in a nationwide perspective. Hereby, we implemented national webinars focusing on participation, recovery and innovative social psychiatric achievements.

Following themes were actualized:

Employment and Working ability: Strategies of individual placement and support aiming at reintegration in to the working world. The role of employment in our society. Narratives of users having experienced and getting help in this process.

User participation: How to realize and encourage participatory processes of recovery and rehabilitation. “Nothing about me without me.” The role of society to strategically facilitate user engagement.

Family and relatives engagement in psychiatric teamwork. Strategies to encourage and utilize this participation in social psychiatric concrete daily work. A crucial engagement, that today is neglected.

Mental health promotion and the influence of societal factors. What must decision makers and professionals consider to create respectful and ethical societal strategies for mental health promotion? Aspects on identity, autonomy, respect, social connectedness and meaning are crucial.

Effectiveness of different strategies and their implementation. Different kinds of evidence and quality reassurance regarding social psychiatric strategies. Pro’s and con’s concerning the use, non-use and over use of different evidence conceptualisations.

Mental ill health and recovery in times of Corona. Who are the most vulnerable groups? What does this mean for psychiatry, social psychiatry and their future role? Infodemia? Innovative synergies?

Recovery from psychiatric comorbidity. Treating psychiatric disorders vs. social support of people with addiction. Problems of cooperation between social welfare and psychiatry – and meeting patients in-between, exposed to gaps in responsibilities and ideologies. Need of a holistic integrative and person oriented view with the person in centrum

Future and ways forward in a social psychiatric perspective. Societal problems - lessons learned needs, obstacles, challenges, possibilities and solutions. “After corona” – new perspectives for users, relatives, professionals - with a focus on comorbidity, labour market, societal attitudes, stigmatisations, taboos. Considering Human’s basic needs of meaning, social connectedness, dignity and self-governance.

These webinars gained significant and increasing attention. They were offered by professional members of the board and invited speakers belonging to our societal, academical, political and professional environment.

The audience was broad: professionally and politically interested people, engaged in the societal and political discourse, as well as users and their next of kin.

Opportunities were given for reflection, exchange of views, problematizing, elaboration and social interaction. Focus was as much on questioning, formulating new challenges as on giving orthodox and “correct” answers. Listeners’ feedback was positive and the format of digital or hybrid meetings will – in spite of all technical and communicative shortcomings – certainly become part of our further meeting activities.

Other activities:

Nationally: Consultation to governmental authorities on mental health and social welfare as well as to non-governmental organisations on user influence, family engagement, social support and political support. The board involved in academic activities on university level.

Internationally: Communication with WHO Geneva and Copenhagen. Consultations given to Austrian governmental authorities on gender, suicide prevention and male mental health promotion.

(contd...)

(...contd) Advise to the German governmental program on suicide prevention, chairmanship of its scientific advisory board. Participation in WASPs international advisory. Co-chairing the WASP section on policies of immigrants and refugees. A board representative gave a digital lecture on Swedish refugees social psychiatric situation at the annual international meeting of person-centred medicine in Geneva and co-organised and lectured digitally on a symposium at WASPs international meeting in New Delhi.

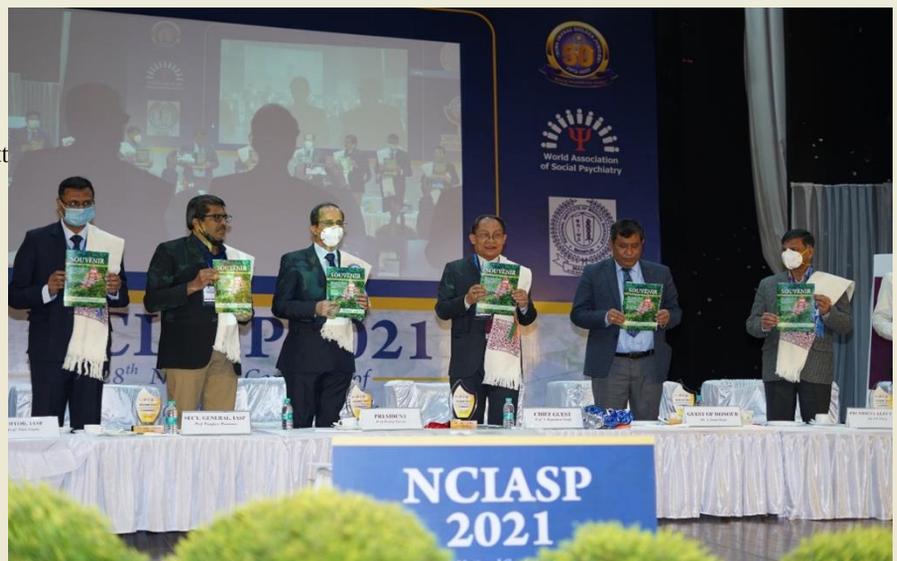
Zophia Mellgren, Chairperson, and
Wolfgang Rutz, International Secretary
Swedish Social Psychiatric Forum

28TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL PSYCHIATRY (NCIASP 2021) 26th-28th November 2021

28th National Conference of Indian Association of Social Psychiatry (NCIASP 2021) was organised by the Department of Psychiatry, Regional Institute of Medical Sciences, Imphal (Manipur) at its Jubilee Hall, on 26th-28th November 2021. The theme of the Congress was “Conflicts, Culture & Social Wellness”. The state of Manipur is located in Northeast India, and it was for the first time that the annual meeting of the IASP was held in Manipur. The conference was co-sponsored by the World Association of Social Psychiatry and the World Psychiatric Association. The Conference coincided with the yearlong celebration of Golden Jubilee Celebration of RIMS, Imphal. Prof Pratap Sharan, President, IASP presided over the Conference. Professor N. Rajmuhon Singh, Vice Chancellor, DM University, Imphal was the Chief Guest and Dr A. Santa Singh, Director, RIMS, Imphal, Manipur was the Guest of Honour. Professor Pratap Sharan delivered presidential address entitled “Random Tales on COVID and Culture.”

The conference was held in a hybrid mode and was attended by 147 delegates. Scientific programme included invited lecture by Professor Vincenzo Di Nicola, President Elect, WASP, NN De Oration by Professor Roy Abraham Kallivayalil, Past President, WASP and A Venkoba Rao Oration by Professor SK Khandelwal, Past President, IASP. Twenty-three symposiums including the theme symposium were presented in the conference. The theme symposium was titled “Conflict, culture and social wellness.” Eminent speakers talked on social mental health issues raised by the partition of India (Prof A Kala), terrorism (Prof D Basu), tribal identities (Prof RK Lenin Singh), and violence in families (Dr Indu PV). The programme also included award sessions, free papers, and poster sessions. Dr R.K. Lenin Singh Professor and Head, Department of Psychiatry, RIMS was the chair, organizing committee and Dr S. Gojendra Singh was the Organizing Secretary. Professor RK Chadda, Secretary General, WASP, Professor Debasish Basu, Editor, World Social Psychiatry, Dr UC Garg, President Elect, IASP, Professor Punnoose Varghese, Secretary General, IASP, Dr Gauri Shankar Kaloiya, Treasurer, IASP, and Professor Nitin Gupta, Editor, IJSP also attended the conference.

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Resident Speak

COVID-19 and the experience of a Psychiatry trainee

COVID-19 has ushered in changes worldwide in the past year and continuing to do so till date with health care professionals, especially in emergency medicine, infectious medicine and critical care settings bearing the maximum brunt of it. But even a mental health professional was not immune to the adverse situations that this deadly infection has brought in with it. In the final year of my postgraduation residency, the sudden spike of cases of COVID-19 in India put the entire country in a lockdown. That was the beginning of the chaotic uncertainty which followed. The news of the pandemic increased distress and anxiety in the people in the country. Our patients initially suffered following a break in compliance to medications and inability to follow-up due to the lockdown leading to relapse or exacerbations of symptoms. But the department worked together in initiating teleconsultation services to reach out to the patients. Though it was a new experience for us, we were happy and content to be able to fulfil our duties to cater to our patients within the constraints. On one hand we feared contracting infection ourselves and on the other, the uncertainty of the final examination was giving us sleepless nights. We experienced taking our examinations in the hybrid mode with case vignettes replacing real patients. To our utter relief, the examinations went well and we breathed a sigh of relief.

But little did I know that the struggle had just begun. With the beginning of my days as a trainee in Addiction Psychiatry last year, I realised this pandemic has brought in new challenges for us. Be it presenting academics online or talking to 'masked' patients through glass barrier or virtually to reduce risk of infection, the situation was essentially a 'new normal'. Soon with the advent of the second wave of COVID-19 in India, we were posted in COVID wards as treating physicians. Though initially it was overwhelming and stressful for a psychiatrist to manage critically ill patients in such settings, me and my colleagues put forward our best efforts to learn the triage and management of such patients where every second and every move is crucial. Maybe losing few near and dear ones to the deadly illness in the last year added on to my altruistic zeal to help the patients suffering from COVID as much as possible. Witnessing death of patients from such close proximity was saddening and painful (the fogging of the PPE hid our tears), but at the end of the day I felt lucky to be still alive at that moment. Nevertheless, we got the opportunity to learn and acquire new clinical skills of providing consultation and liaisoning with other medical specialities in managing psychiatric symptoms in the patients suffering from COVID-19. At the end of the tiring shifts, being packed in the suffocating PPEs, it was the smile on the face and the blessings of the patients which kept us going through the tough times. Subsequently things started to become better and we returned to our routine postings thereafter, praying we do not face another wave of the infection.

This pandemic has given us the opportunity to realise our strengths and adaptability to adverse situations, uniting us across the world virtually. Here's to looking forward to a brighter future with a 'new ourselves' in a 'new normal world'.

Ankita Chattopadhyay

DM Addiction Psychiatry Resident, New Delhi, India

A Resident's Experience of working in All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) during COVID-19 Pandemic

As a senior resident working in a general hospital psychiatry setting, I got the opportunity to treat patients admitted with COVID-19 infection in addition to providing routine psychiatric services. The obstacles posed by COVID-19 in psychiatry training required innovative approaches. We had to devise techniques for managing patients and also teaching postgraduate residents. We used a hybrid method for diagnosis and management of inpatients, detailed case discussions were conducted through virtual clinical rounds, followed by bedside clinical rounds wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). We used a digital medium to facilitate interviewing the patients for a long duration while maintaining physical distancing. The resident sitting in one room interviewed the patient sitting in another room using computers connected by a local area network. For providing consultation-liaison services, residents of other specialties fixed appointments with psychiatry residents for detailed interviews of the inpatients admitted in their respective specialties.

(contd...)

Resident Speak (...contd)

After interviewing the patients, we did a bedside physical examination and required mental state examination with PPE. We also got the opportunity to provide consultation-liaison services to patients admitted for the management of COVID-19. As a part of the institute with varied medical fraternities such as medical undergraduate students, research scholars, nursing students, post-graduate residents, and faculties, we had the opportunity to address the mental health needs of various health care workers during COVID-19. As a part of the team of the student wellness center, I had the opportunity to coordinate various digital e-wellness clubs where the medical fraternities could communicate and discuss their extracurricular skills such as literature, dance, culinary, photography, and art, etc. I assisted in making various mental health awareness videos and posters for the general population, mental health professionals, and patients with mental illness. COVID problems required digital solutions, as a psychiatry resident, I could actively contribute to the social aspects of those around me.

Dr. Ragul Ganesh

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All India Institute of Medical Sciences

New Delhi, India

Announcement

**XXIV World Social Psychiatry Congress London, UK
November 2022**

Details Coming Soon

**Contributions are welcome for the World Social Psychiatry
(Official Journal of the WASP)**

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Report of the Asia Pacific Hybrid Congress of the World Association of Social Psychiatry (WASP 2021)

The Asia Pacific Hybrid Congress of the World Association of Social Psychiatry (WASP 2021) was held at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, on 16th–18th September 2021. The Congress was organized by the Department of Psychiatry and the National Drug Dependence Treatment Center, AIIMS, New Delhi. The theme of the Congress was “Innovations in social psychiatry across the world.” The Congress was attended by 714 delegates from 30 countries from the different continents of the world. About 100 participants attended the Congress in physical mode as well.

WASP 2021 Congress was inaugurated by Prof. PC Joshi, Vice Chancellor, University of Delhi, who also delivered the inaugural address. Prof. Randeep Guleria, Director, AIIMS, New Delhi, Prof. Rakesh Chadda, Chair, Organizing Committee, Prof. Pratap Sharan, President, Indian Association for Social Psychiatry (IASP), Prof Vincenzo Di Nicola, President Elect, WASP and Prof Roy Abraham Kallivayalil, Immediate Past President, WASP also addressed the gathering. Prof Afzal Javed, President, World Psychiatric Association (WPA) also graced the inaugural function in the virtual mode.

The scientific program included plenary sessions, symposia, workshops, oral communications, poster presentations, early career psychiatrist program and award sessions. The Congress venue included two hybrid halls and seven virtual halls. More than 90 symposia and workshops were presented in the Congress covering different aspects of psychiatry. This included the use of online mode to impart mental health training to different service providers, including undergraduate and postgraduate teaching; use of telepsychiatry in addressing mental health issues during COVID-19; impact of COVID-19 on the mental health in different population groups, including migrants, homeless population, and caregivers; innovations in community service delivery mechanism to address mental health problems; challenges in training and conducting research during COVID-19; innovations in the field of addiction psychiatry; and many other topics. The program included a debate on whether suicides are a societal problem, rather than a mental health problem.

The Congress also had an award session for young mental health professionals for “best oral” and “best poster” presentation. Dr. Debanjan Banerjee won the best oral communication award for his work on exploring the experiences and perceptions of women with severe mental illnesses with regard to motherhood. Dr. Romil Saini won the best poster communication award for his work on assessing the rates and type of various mental illnesses among people injecting drugs.

Overall, the WASP Asia Pacific Hybrid Congress conducted in trying times as this, can be deemed to be very successful with large participation from different and diverse countries. The Congress provided an ideal platform for exchange of ideas, sharing of concerns, and discussing newer ideas for implementation that would help in alleviating mental health problems. It is hoped that the new relationships forged during the Congress would foster newer collaborations and generate newer areas of research in the area of social psychiatry.

An online session in progress



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The George Washington University Global Health Professor, Eliot SOREL, MD and former World Association for Social Psychiatry President, 1996-2001, was recently honored by the Washington, DC Romanian-American community for his leadership role on bringing Romania to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington DC, and for continued superb service to the community.



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