ABOUT MENTAL DISORDERS

World Health Organization

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE **Eastern Mediterranean**

Mental disorders are a common health problem around the world. People in every country and every culture are affected.

Mental illness – a global challenge

At any given time, about 1 person in every 10 worldwide is suffering from a mental disorder, and about 1 in 4 families has a member with a mental disorder. Over 800 000 people die due to suicide every year, and it is the second most common cause of death among 15–29-year-olds. About three quarters of all suicides occur in low- and middle-income countries.

Mental and neurological disorders affect people of all ages. Around 20% of the world's children and adolescents have mental disorders or problems, and roughly half of all mental disorders begin before the age of 14.

Mental disorders can be treated successfully

The good news is that effective treatment is available through medicines and/or psychosocial treatment such as counselling. Early identification and effective management of mental disorders are key to ensuring that people receive the care they need.

However, the vast majority – between 76% and 85% – of people with a mental disorder in poorer countries do not receive treatment. This is partly because resources are unavailable or not well used, but also because the widespread misunderstanding and stigma surrounding mental illness can be serious barriers that prevent people from getting help.

Although mental disorders can be treated successfully, many people believe that they are untreatable or that people with mental disorders are difficult, not intelligent, or not capable of making decisions. This stigma can lead to abuse, rejection and isolation, and can exclude people from health care or support.

It is therefore crucial to raise awareness about mental disorders. Everyone needs to understand that they are very common, can happen to anybody and can be treated successfully. People with mental disorders are no different from anyone else.

This is one of a series of factsheets produced by the World Health Organization (WHO) to give the general public more information about mental disorders and how they can be treated. You can download all the factsheets free of charge from the WHO website at: www.emro.who.int/mnh.