

Regional consultation on enhancing the capacity of Member States to implement anti-stigma programmes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

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Introduction

Mental health is an integral part of our general health and wellbeing and a basic human right (1,2). However, the economic downturns, social polarization, public health emergencies, widespread humanitarian emergencies, forced displacement, climate crises, and even COVID-19 are major threats to mental health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was more than 25% increase in anxiety and depressive disorders globally (3). Mental disorders are leading causes of years lived with disability (YLD) and account for 1 in every 6 YLD cases globally (4).

There are major gaps and imbalances in information, research, governance, resources, and services for mental health worldwide (5). Stigma and discrimination are among the major contributors to these imbalances, mainly at home, school, workplace, and even within the mental healthcare system. Stigma and discrimination can cause social isolation and impact a person's ability to earn income, enjoy social interactions, access quality healthcare, and, ultimately, it can hinder recovery (6).

In June 2022, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean held a regional consultation involving representatives of ministries of health, civil society organizations, and experts, to enhance the capacity of countries to implement anti-stigma programmes. Participants received updates on efforts to tackle mental health-related stigma. They discussed available tools and resources for setting up anti-stigma programmes and the support that countries require to design and implement evidence-based anti-stigma interventions.

Summary of discussions

Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Tunisia, and United Arab Emirates have implemented several interventions to reduce mental health-related stigma (7). These include mental health training for healthcare workers to improve service parity and equality, case management, communication, and respect for patients' rights, thus increasing awareness and health-seeking behaviour. Although country contexts are diverse politically and socioeconomically in the Region, mental health-related challenges remain largely similar.

The increased awareness about the importance of mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic is a unique opportunity to bridge service gaps and reduce the related stigma and discrimination. The Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2030 (8), the Regional Framework to Scaleup Action on Mental Health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (9), the World Mental Health Report (10), and the associated tools and resources published by WHO provide strategic directions for addressing stigma and discrimination.

Although there are cost-effective interventions to reduce stigma and discrimination, these interventions need to be implemented efficiently and adapted to specific contexts (11). When conducted under optimal conditions, social contact interventions are the best in reducing stigma and discrimination, especially for immediate impact. Indirect social contact interventions, such as watching testimonial videos of people who experience mental health disorders, are as effective as direct contact. However, strong involvement of civil society organizations in planning and implementation is essential for success of such interventions. The power of social media, including the use of celebrity stories, can be leveraged in combating stereotypes, conducting advocacy, and reducing prejudice.

Effective stigma reduction campaigns must be evidenced-based, creative, multifaceted, and focused on empathy and tackling negative stereotypes. Generating local evidence is essential to ensure continuity, improve learning, and secure funding. Lessons can be drawn from efforts to raise political commitment, mobilize resources, combat stigma, and enhance access to HIV/AIDS services.

Recommendations

Through outreach activities and advocacy at national and subnational levels, Member States are to strengthen multisectoral partnerships, including with people who experience mental health disorders and their support networks, to leverage scarce resources for mental health and integrate anti-stigma actions into mental health law, policies, and interventions.

WHO is to facilitate national, regional and global consultations to identify and document emerging

¹ Summary report of the regional consultation on enhancing the capacity of Member States to implement anti-stigma programmes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. <https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/WHOEMMNH228E-eng.pdf>

challenges and how to overcome them, support Member States in developing or refining their national mental health anti-stigma plans, and facilitate the creation of a

mental health advisory group to support implementation of the regional mental health framework.

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Foundation for the State of Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes In the EMR

State of Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The State of Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region is one of several Foundation awards, administered by the World Health Organization, which acknowledges the work of well-known scientists, researchers or dedicated people who have greatly contributed to the advancement of public health.

Purpose

The purpose of the prize is to recognize individuals who have made an outstanding contribution in prevention, control or research in one or more of the following disease groups: cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Eligibility

The Prize will be awarded to one or more persons for making an outstanding contribution in prevention, control and research in one or more of the following disease groups: cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Current and former members of the WHO Secretariat shall not be eligible to receive the Prize nor should the candidature of a deceased person be submitted to the Foundation Committee, unless death occurs after the nomination has been made.

A candidate who has been previously awarded, and has been re-nominated after several years, will only be eligible if a new contribution has been made.

Candidates are more likely to receive the prize (maximum three recipients per year, one per disease) if they fulfil the following criteria:

- Contribute to the successful formulation and implementation of national policy and strategy for one or more of the following disease groups: cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- Submit documentary evidence that research and other programmes have been translated into policy and have contributed to improving prevention and/or control in one or more of the three disease groups.

In order to facilitate the assessment of their work, candidates will be requested to upload documentation in support of their application, illustrating how they made a substantive contribution in prevention, control or research in one or more of the three disease groups. The Foundation Committee reserves the right to request further information from the applicant to better review his/her application.

Nature of the prize and attribution

The prize consists of a bronze medal and a sum of money.

The prize is presented to the recipient, or representative thereof, in case of absence, at the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean by the Committee's Chairman.

Deadline for submission

The deadline for submission for the 2023 State of Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region is 1 July 2023.

Prize timeline

A list of the shortlisted candidates will be sent to national health administrations for endorsement from July to early-August 2023.

The Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean in October 2023 will decide which candidate will receive the prize, which will be awarded to the recipient the following year at the 71st session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean in October 2024.



<http://kuwaitprize.emro.who.int/>
Deadline for online submission 1 July 2023

More information about the eligibility criteria and access to the online application form is available at: <http://kuwaitprize.emro.who.int/>

Deadline for online submission is 1 July 2023