



EPA STATEMENT FOR THE WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY Working together to prevent suicide

10 October 2019 – On the occasion of today’s World Mental Health Day, in addition to the key messages delivered on 10 September, the European Psychiatric Association (EPA) and its National Psychiatric Associations (NPAs) join the WHO “40 seconds of action” campaign to increase awareness of the tremendous impact of suicide as a global public health problem and let people know what can be done to prevent suicide.

Close to 800 000 people die due to suicide every year which is one person every 40 seconds. Suicide is a global phenomenon and occurs throughout the lifespan. Effective and evidence-based interventions can be implemented at population, sub-population and individual levels to prevent suicide and suicide attempts. There are indications that for each adult who died by suicide there may have been more than 20 others attempting suicide.

As a European Network representing over 80.000 health professionals across Europe, the EPA would like to put a particular emphasis on the importance of training the healthcare personnel about suicide and suicide prevention.

Training of general practitioners is effective in the prevention of suicide. It improves treatment of depression and anxiety, quality of the provided care and attitudes towards suicide. As shown in the [EPA guidance on suicide treatment and prevention](#), continuous training including discussions about ethical and legal issues is necessary for psychiatrists, other mental health professionals and general practitioners.

Prof. Marco Sarchiapone, Chair of the EPA Section on Suicidology and Suicide Prevention, states that *“since patients who attempt suicide are more likely to have contact with their primary care provider rather than with a mental health professional in the month before attempting suicide, it will often be up to medical personnel, such as general practitioners or emergency care physicians, to encounter suicide attempters”*.

To contribute to suicide prevention, specific training is needed to address and improve diagnostic skills and competency in suicide ideation and depression assessment. Regarding physicians, training should start during medical school and residency, keeping in mind that medical students' attitudes toward suicide are associated with appropriate therapeutic responses to suicidal individuals. Beyond their clinical role in the field of suicide prevention, psychiatrists should not neglect their educational and training role for all professions involved in general and psychosocial patient care, including physicians, specialists, social workers and nurses.

At national level, each government should integrate suicide prevention as an integral part of the training and education programmes for the healthcare sector and beyond. As highlighted by Prof. Simavi Vahip, Chair of the EPA Council of National Psychiatric Associations (NPAs), *“if it is true that suicide mortality rates vary across countries, we can still learn a lot from each other’s by exchanging good practices and learning from successful interventions, which prove that investing in suicide*

prevention initiatives can save lives. With this in mind, the EPA National Psychiatric Associations are strongly committed to promote mental health and prevent suicide at country level.”

On the World Mental Health Day, the EPA wishes to remind everyone that mental illnesses are prevalent disorders (1 out of 4 persons have one) which can lead to suicide, but which can also be well diagnosed and treated. Along this, recognizing and treating the underlying causes for suicidality is the most effective way to save the lives of 800.000 people every year and improve the life quality of many others.

Notes for editors :

1. The **World Mental Health Day (WMHD)** is an initiative launched by the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) and is observed on 10 October every year, with the overall objective of raising awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilizing efforts in support of mental health. The Day provides an opportunity for all stakeholders working on mental health issues to talk about their work, and what more needs to be done to make mental health care a reality for people worldwide. This year, the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) has decided to make “suicide prevention” the main theme of World Mental Health Day. More information on the [WMHF website](#).
2. The **European Psychiatric Association (EPA)**: with active individual members in as many as 88 countries and 44 National Psychiatric Association Members that represent more than 80,000 European psychiatrists, the EPA is the main association representing psychiatry in Europe. The EPA’s activities address the interests of psychiatrists in academia, research and practice throughout all stages of career development.

The EPA deals with psychiatry and its related disciplines and focuses on the improvement of care for the mentally ill as well as on the development of professional excellence.

www.europsy.net

1. The **EPA Section of Suicidology and Suicide Prevention** aims at improving research in this field and translating research findings into clinical practice. The Section adheres to a bio-psycho-social perspective and involves an international and multidisciplinary network of researchers and clinicians.
<https://suicidologysection.org/>
2. **For more information:**
Mari Fresu mari.fresu@europsy.net