

EDITORIAL:

Medical students and academia health and wellness

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JSMU Health & Wellness Centre (JSMU-HCW): Concept Paper & Implementation Framework

Background

JSMU acknowledges with great appreciation the receipt of the Letter No. PF-5-ADR-PM&DC/2026/1132, dated 29th April 2026 regarding the implementation of mental health screening and counselling services within medical and dental institutions.

JSMU values this timely and visionary initiative of the Pakistan Medical & Dental Council, recognising that psychological wellbeing is fundamental to academic excellence, professional competence, patient safety, and the long-term sustainability of healthcare systems. The increasing burden of stress, burnout, emotional distress, and psychosocial challenges within healthcare education and training environments necessitates proactive, evidence-based, and institutionally integrated mental health and wellbeing support mechanisms. It's important to note that JSMU had already identified the critical need for mental health and wellbeing support (<https://www.dawn.com/news/1974003>) within the institution before the PM&DC directive was issued. The University had initiated academic discussions, seminars, and collaborative engagements focusing on stress management, burnout prevention, resilience building, public mental health, and wellness promotion among students and healthcare professionals. These initiatives reflect JSMU's proactive commitment towards fostering psychologically safe and supportive academic environments. (On 7th January 2026 : [Seminar on Health and Well-being at JSMU Highlights Mental Health Awareness | PULSE International](#))

In continuation of these efforts and prior to the alignment with PM&DC's recent directions, JSMU established the "JSMU Health and Wellness Centre" (induction in the 39th Academic Council Meeting Agenda was requested on 28th February 2026 with Approval on 9th March 2026

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18paapEsAD/>) to provide dedicated, confidential, and stigma-free psychiatric and psychological support services for students and faculty members in collaboration with experts from Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC). The initiative was launched in connection with International Wellness Day 2026 under the theme "Integrating Joy and Sustainable Health Practices into Daily Life." The programme included mindfulness sessions, stress management activities, breathing exercises, JSMU wellness pledge, counselling awareness activities, presenting of Wellness Motivational Packs and wellbeing engagements aimed at fostering resilience, emotional wellbeing, and healthy coping mechanisms within the academic community. (Establishment of JSMU-HWC on 27 April 2026: [Dawn News – JSMU opens facility to help students cope with stress and burnout](#) & [JSMU Official Communication – Wellness Day and Health & Wellness Centre Initiative](#))

Furthermore, JSMU actively contributed towards national and international academic dialogues addressing mental health, public wellbeing, healthcare resilience, burnout prevention, and interdisciplinary collaboration through seminars, conferences, and symposiums. The University participated in the international symposium "Bridging the East & West: Prioritising Global Health, Wellbeing, Education, and Research," held at the Royal Society of Medicine, London in commemoration of World Mental Health Day 2024, emphasising the global

importance of integrating mental wellbeing into healthcare education, institutional policies, and professional practice.

Relevant coverage: [Pulse International – Global Symposium on Health, Wellbeing, Education and Research Collaboration](#)

In order to incorporate these efforts, a comprehensive concept paper focusing on strengthening mental health screening protocols, counselling and referral pathways, wellness promotion, resilience building, and multidisciplinary psychosocial support mechanisms has also been drafted for JSMU by the HEC-Distinguished National Professor Dr M. Iqbal Afridi TI. In this regard, a motivational logo was designed to symbolise resilience, healing, inner growth, and holistic wellness at JSMU, representing the ability to rise above challenges and flourish with strength, balance, and renewal. The proposed framework aims to support the development of a sustainable, evidence-informed, and student-centred mental health model within the University in alignment with PM&DC standards and international best practices.

JSMU remains fully committed to further strengthening structured mental health screening protocols, counselling mechanisms, referral systems, awareness initiatives, and multidisciplinary support services in accordance with PM&DC standards and national priorities. The University shall continue to uphold its vision of fostering a safe, compassionate, psychologically supportive, and academically conducive environment for all students, faculty members, trainees, and healthcare professionals.

Human Resource Requirements

1. Head of the Center

- Senior faculty member (Psychiatry / Psychology/Public Health / Family Medicine / Behavioral Sciences).
- Reports to Registrar/Director QEC
- Responsible for strategy, policy, and quality assurance.

2. Clinical & Professional Staff

- Clinical Psychologist / Counsellor
- Physician (Family Medicine)
- Physical Activity / Fitness Trainer (Part-time)
- Support Staff
- Administrative Officer

3. Facility, Safety & Accessibility Standards

To ensure client safety, regulators inspect the physical space for several key elements.

- **Building & Maintenance:** Walls must be well-painted (often specific colors for branding), floors non-slippery, and premises free of pests and junk. There should be no water logging or major cracks.
- **Safety Systems:** Need proper lighting, emergency exits, fire safety equipment, and a backup power supply.
- **Utilities & Plumbing:** Toilets (separate for men/women where required) must have running water and functional cisterns. Sewage systems (septic tanks/soak pits) must be properly maintained.
- **Accessibility:** Facilities must comply with disability access laws (e.g., ramps, door widths).

Functions of the Centre

The functions to be aligned with **WHO holistic health model** and international campus wellness frameworks.

1. Mental Health Services

- Confidential counselling
- Psychological assessment
- Crisis management
- Referral to psychiatric services

2. Preventive & Primary Health Screening (Family Medicine)

- Routine health checkups
- Health risk assessments
- Referral Services

3. Health Promotion & Education

- Workshops/Seminars on:
 - Stress management
 - Anger Management
 - Health Lifestyle
 - Rest and Sleep Hygiene
 - Importance of drinking safe water for appropriate thinking, emotion etc
 - Nutrition and wellbeing
 - Exercise & fitness
 - Emotional intelligence
 - Work-life balance
 - Time management
 - Rational Utilisation of Gadgets: Digital Detox
 - How to study scientifically
 - Psychological First Aid
- Annual wellness campaigns
- Seminars with students/faculty of JSMU on United Nation International World days related to health/Mental health each year (<https://www.un.org/en/observances/list-days-weeks>)
 - International Day of Happiness 20th March,
 - World Health Day 7th April,
 - International Wellness Day 15th April
 - World No Tobacco Day 31st May
 - International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, 26th June,
 - World Suicide Prevention Day 10 September
 - World Mental Health Day 10 October
 - International Day against Violence and Bullying at School, Including Cyberbullying, First Thursday of November

4. Physical Wellness Programs

- Exercise & fitness
- Yoga / fitness sessions
- Walking clubs
- Fitness challenges

5. Student & Staff Support Programs

- Peer mentoring (wellbeing component)
- Burnout prevention programs for faculty
- Exam stress reduction programs

6. Crisis Response & Emergency Protocol

- Suicide risk response SOP
- Trauma response system
- Referral linkages with tertiary hospitals

Red flags requiring immediate referral to Psychiatric Unit:

1. Talking about suicide or hopelessness
2. Not eating or drinking for >24 hours
3. Complete mutism or stupor
4. Aggression or wandering in unsafe areas

Term of Reference (TORs)

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive university wellness strategy.
2. Ensure equitable access to wellness services.
3. Provide confidential mental health and counselling services.
4. Conduct preventive health screening programs.
5. Maintain strict data confidentiality.
6. Submit quarterly reports to Registrar.
7. Coordinate with:
 - Student Affairs
 - QEC
 - Examination Department (exam stress programs)
 - HR Department (staff wellbeing)

Infrastructure Requirements

Two Rooms with necessary equipment.

- BP apparatus
- Height & Digital weighing machine with BMI and Visceral Fat Calculation
- Pro forma designed for this purpose
- Psychometric Tools
 1. General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)
 2. Patients Health Questionnaire PHQ-9
 3. Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS)
 4. Beck Suicide Inventory

5. Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7)
6. Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-10)
7. WHO 5 Wellbeing,
8. APA DSM-5-TR Self-Rated Level 1 Cross-Cutting Symptom Measure—Adult
9. LEVEL 2—Substance Use—Adult (adapted from the NIDA-Modified ASSIST)
10. Personality Inventory for DSM-5—Brief Form (PID-5-BF)—Adult
11. Human Figure Drawing Test (HFD)
12. Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)
13. Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank (RISB) test

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(Reviewed Manuscript - Version of Record to Follow)

Stage	Timing	Target	Domains
Admission	First 6 weeks of Year 1	All new entrants	Baseline MH, substance history, prior harassment
Annual	Once per academic year (preferably semester 2)	All students & faculty	Current MH, substance use, past-year harassment, burnout
Incident-triggered	Within 48 hours of report	Complainant & alleged perpetrator (separately)	Harassment or substance use witnessed

Domain	Validated Tool	Administration time
Depression/Anxiety/Stress	DASS-21*	5 minutes
Suicide risk	PHQ-9 **	1 minute
Substance use	DAST-10***	5-7 minutes
Harassment/bullying	NAQ-R (adapted) ****	6 minutes
Burnout	Oldenburg Burnout Inventory	4 minutes

*DASS-21 (Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale – 21), **PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire-9),

Finding	Action	Deadline
Moderate distress (Amber)	Counselling unit appointment	7 days
High distress / suicidal ideation (Red)	Psychiatry evaluation	24-48 hours
Substance use disorder	Psychiatry + De-toxification/Rehab. services	7 days
Harassment complaint	Anti-Harassment Committee investigation	10 days (report)

6. Required Infrastructure

Component	Requirement
Psychiatry Department	Full-time psychiatrist; inpatient/outpatient capability
Counselling Unit	Confidential space; psychologist available initially 2 days & then 5 days /week
Anti-Harassment Committee	Trained members; 10-day investigation mandate
Secure IT platform	Anonymous screening; data inaccessible to academic examiners

7. Accountability & Enforcement

- **Annual PM&DC inspection** – institutions must submit screening completion rates and referral logs
- **Retaliation prohibited** – any punitive action against a person seeking help is a separate violation
- **Data privacy absolute** – results cannot be shared with examiners, HR, or used for employment decisions

8. Immediate Action Checklist for Principals

- Establish/activate JSU-HWC for Assessment, Counselling, Psychotherapy & referral to Psychiatry department, JPMC and the hospitals of the respective Medical & Dental Colleges
- Form Anti-Harassment Committee (display contacts prominently)
- Allocation of budget for Promotion of Mental Health & prevention early detection and treatment mental disorders.
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- Schedule admission screening within 6 weeks of next batch arrival
- Train faculty in referral protocols (1 hour mandatory annually)

Future directions

- Extension of the services to House Officers/interns, Postgraduate students of all medical, dental and allied disciplines, Nursing & paramedical students & Faculty (for use freely available versions)
- Research and Development, monitoring and evaluation (KPIs), and Quality Improvement & Enhancement
- Culturally appropriate and User-Friendly Digital/Web-based Applications
- Extension of similar services as a Public Health Preventive Model
- Policy and Legislative Reforms (National & Provincial)