

## ACADEMIC MENTAL HEALTH GALA: BRIDGING THE GAP

UROOJ ZAFAR<sup>1</sup> and ALI BURHAN MUSTAFA<sup>2</sup><sup>1,2</sup>Department of Psychiatry, Sheikh Zayed Medical College/Hospital, Rahim Yar Khan

CORRESPONDENCE: DR. ALI BURHAN MUSTAFA

E-mail: drburhanmustafa@szmc.edu.pk

According to a 2016 BBC report, approximately 15 million people in Pakistan are grappling with psychiatric disorders. Despite these staggering figures, psychiatric patients in Pakistan continue to seek recognition of their rights to proper treatment, amid a clash between ancient cultural beliefs and modern psychiatric practices.<sup>1</sup>

The Department of Psychiatry & Behavioural Sciences of Sheikh Zayed Medical College/Hospital (SZMCH) in Rahim Yar Khan (RYK) has been a strong advocate for providing effective treatment to the mentally ailing community. As part of these efforts, an event namely “Academic Mental Health Gala: Bridging the Gap” was organised in Rahim Yar Khan on March 6th and 7th, 2022. The gala was a collaborative effort by the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioural Sciences at SZMCH, along with the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), Pakistan Psychiatric Society (PPS), The Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB) RYK Campus, Enabling Centre IUB, Mind Health Movement, and Al-Mustafa Mental, Addiction and Behavioural Health Services.

The Academic Mental Health Gala encompassed a cutting-edge blend of online and in-person academic sessions. The online workshops commenced from February 12th 2022 which featured five state-of-the-art workshops that covered areas such as Forensics, Drug Addiction/Substance Use, Time management, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders and Social Media. These workshops were led by distinguished facilitators, including Prof. Dr Tariq Hassan (Canada), Prof. Dr Fareed Aslam Minhas, Prof. Dr Muhammad Bashir, Prof. Dr Nazish Imran, and Dr Khadija Masood (UK).

The in-person academic sessions comprised five workshops that aimed to enhance knowledge in diverse domains such as Borderline Personality Disorder, Schizophrenia, Parenting, Mini Neuropsychiatric Interviews, and a riveting literary discussion about Faiz Ahmed Faiz (a renowned poet). Prof. Mowadat Hussain Rana, Prof. Nasar Khan (Canada), Prof. Raza ur Rehman, Prof. Nadeem Bajwa, and Dr Muhammad Zeshan (US) facilitated these physical workshops. In addition, some distinguished speakers led the keynote sessions, which included Meritorious Prof. Muhammad Iqbal Afridi, Prof. Muhammad Ayub (UK), Prof. Imtiaz Ahmed Dogar, Prof. Ali Zulqarnain, and other eminent mental health professionals.

During the Academic Mental Health Gala, several projects were inaugurated. These developments comprised the Ketamine clinic, Psychiatric ICU, and the digitalisation of inpatient and virtual case conference rooms. Notably, a significant Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between Vice Chancellor IUB, Prof. Dr. Ather Mehboob, and Principal SZMCH, Prof. Dr Tariq Ahmed, which focused on academia, research, and capacity building of mental health services.<sup>2</sup>

A state-of-the-art seminar was also organised after the academic mental health gala that drew considerable attendance from mental health professionals, intellectuals, civil society members, and students. The Keynote speakers were Dean of Faculty of Psychiatry CPSP (College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan) and Editor-in-Chief of JPPS (Journal of Pakistan Psychiatric Society) - Meritorious Prof. Muhammad Iqbal Afridi,<sup>3</sup> President of PPS - Prof. Imtiaz Ahmed Dogar,<sup>4</sup> and President of WPA - Prof. Afzal Javed.<sup>5</sup> The Chair of the Organising Committee, Prof. Ali Burhan Mustafa expressed gratitude for the speakers and delegates from around the world, who gathered in Rahim Yar Khan to extend their support for raising awareness, destigmatising mental health issues, and capacity building.

As part of their visit to Rahim Yar Khan, Dr. Afzal Javed and Prof. Afridi also visited the District Jail and the Department of Psychiatry at SZMCH. Both the guests commended Prof. Mustafa and his team for their efforts for the promotion of mental health.

In the end, Prof. Afridi, the Dean of the Faculty of Psychiatry CPSP chaired an online session called the Dean's Lounge. He shared his vision for improvement of the existing training structure and also addressed the concerns of Postgraduate Trainees of Psychiatry.



#### REFERENCES

1. Why Pakistan's poor seek mental health cure at shrine [Internet]. 2016 [cited 2022 Aug 20]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37495538>
2. The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan [Internet]. The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan; [cited 2022 Aug 20]. Available from: <https://www.iub.edu.pk/uploads/2319/1657178269-january-to-march-2022-1.pdf>
3. Muhammad Iqbal Afridi [Internet]. Baylor College of Medicine [cited 2022 Aug 20]. Available from: <https://www.bcm.edu/people-search/muhammad-afridi-75436>
4. Cabinet 2021-22 [Internet]. Pakistan Psychiatric Society; [cited 2022 Aug 20]. Available from: <https://ppspk.com/cabinet-2021-22/>
5. Executive Committee [Internet]. World Psychiatric Association; [cited 2022 Aug 20]. Available from: <https://www.wpanet.org/exec-committee>