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World Mental Health Day History

World Mental Health Day was observed for the first time on 10 October 1992. It was started as an annual activity of the World Federation for Mental Health by the then Deputy Secretary General Richard Hunter. The day is officially commemorated every year on October 10th.

At the beginning, the Day had no specific theme. Its aims were general ones of promoting mental health advocacy and educating the public on relevant issues. In the first three years one of the central activities to mark the Day was a two-hour telecast broadcast globally through the US information agency satellite system from studios in Talahassee, Florida. WFMH Board members participated from the studio, with live telephone participation from Australia, Chile, England and Zambia and pre-taped segments from Geneva, Atlanta and Mexico City. In the first such telecast we realized that we were indeed reaching far afield, because there was an unanticipated and unscheduled telephone call-in from Swaziland, where a group of WFMH members had gathered to view to the program. And that year the very first of many feed-back reports came from Peru.

The first theme

In 1994, at the suggestion of then Secretary General Eugene Brody, a theme for the Day was used for the first time. It was "Improving the Quality of Mental Health Services throughout the World." Feedback reports were received from 27 countries soon after that campaign, with notable national campaigns in Australia and in England. In many countries WFMH Board members were instrumental in arranging events. Within three years, the Day had become a valuable occasion for interested government departments, organizations and committed individuals to arrange programs to focus on aspects of mental health care.

In 1995 a broad range of international events was reported to the WFMH Secretariat from around the world, ranging from a month-long series of events in Egypt, to a conference held by the French Federation for Mental Health at the Ministry of Health, to a community celebration in the tiny Micronesian Islands in the Pacific. In the United Kingdom, where there was a large national program, we also noted the poignant event at the site of the old London mental hospital which gave us the word "bedlam," where many volunteers, school children and young people with learning difficulties planted spring bulbs.

Multilanguage material

In 1995 we took particular note of the help offered by the Pan American Health Organization. PAHO arranged for the translation of the planning kit material into Spanish, and made 300 copies of the Spanish version available for distribution to its contacts in South America. Inspired by PAHO's initiative, the Federation later arranged for the translation and printing of the planning kit in French and Spanish. Many years later we have managed to translate the material into Spanish, French, Hindi, Russian, Japanese and Chinese and Arabic.

List of themes

Since the early days, the Federation has chosen a theme to be promoted in its planning kit each year. The themes we have used are:

- 1996 Women and Mental Health
- 1997 Children and Mental Health
- 1998 Mental Health and Human Rights
- 1999 Mental Health and Ageing
- 2000-2001 Mental Health and Work

- 2002 The Effects of Trauma and Violence on Children & Adolescents
- 2003 Emotional and Behavioural Disorders of Children & Adolescents
- 2004 The Relationship Between Physical & Mental Health: co-occurring disorders
- 2005 Mental and Physical Health Across the Life Span
- 2006 Building Awareness – Reducing Risk: Mental Illness & Suicide
- 2007 Mental Health in A Changing World: The Impact of Culture and Diversity
- 2008 Making Mental Health a Global Priority: Scaling up Services through Citizen Advocacy and Action
- 2009 Mental Health in Primary Care: Enhancing Treatment and Promoting Mental Health
- 2010 Mental Health and Chronic Physical Illnesses
- 2011 The Great Push: Investing in Mental Health
- 2012 Depression: A Global Crisis
- 2013 Mental Health and Older Adults
- 2014 Living with Schizophrenia
- 2015 Dignity in Mental Health
- 2016 Psychological and Mental Health First Aid
- 2017 Mental Health in the Workplace (/past-events/world-mental-health-day-2017-2/)
- 2018 Young People and Mental Health in a Changing World (/world-mental-health-day-2018/)

Not a one day event

We would like to stress that WMHDAY isn't simply a one day event. The preparations go on for months beforehand and this is truly a long-term educational effort. In some countries the program stretches over several days, or a week, or even in some cases the whole month. And in some places preparations for the following year start almost as soon as the current year's event is over. Reports come to us from around the world at varying rates throughout the entire year following the 10 October events.

This project has evolved over the years to practically run on its own – people all over the world are holding events, making announcements and celebrating WMHDAY. They see the importance of public awareness and we know that our success over the last 26 years has mainly been because of the dedication and hard work of our WMHDAY constituents. The WFMH created this program 26 years ago to help promote mental health and create awareness about the issues associated with mental illness – we opened the door and thousands of people from all over the world have run through and out into the streets to forever declare October 10 as WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY.

Pages

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WMHD2019 – Video (https://wfmh.global/wmhd2019-video/)

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The mission of the World Federation for Mental Health is to promote the advancement of mental health awareness, prevention of mental disorders, advocacy, and best practice recovery focused interventions worldwide.

(https://www.facebook.com /WFMH/) (https://twitter.com /wmhday)

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