



Dr Avdesh Sharma

# GRAND INITIATIVE

By Dr Avdesh Sharma

I would like to congratulate **INDIA EMPIRE**, especially the Editor Mr. Sayantan Chakravarty, for being a partner of the 'Public Education Initiative' of the World Psychiatric Association. The World Psychiatric Association (WPA) is a global body of mental health professionals, especially psychiatrists, in about 130 countries representing their professional organizations consisting of 200,000 psychiatrists from all continents. WPA and **INDIA EMPIRE** would focus on Mental Health and Well Being Issues in each publication of **INDIA EMPIRE** on various aspects by eminent personalities from the field across the world.

Mind is the fulcrum on which life hinges as we experience the world through our minds. Thoughts, emotions, actions and relationships of human beings with themselves, others in society and the environment defines not only the health, wealth, happiness and peace in the world but the very existence of the world itself. While there have been strides in development on economic front; human potential and social justice should not get neglected.

We know that one in four persons will develop a mental illness at least once in their life time. The burden of disease for mental illnesses has been steadily increasing and depression is emerging as the number one disease worldwide in terms of mortality and morbidity. Anxiety, Depression, Panic attacks, Obsessive Compulsive Disorders, Phobias, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Bipolar disorder, Schizophrenia, Childhood mental disorders, Dementia, Culture specific syndromes, Addictions etc. are some of the mental illnesses which commonly afflict humanity. People with mental illnesses may die many years earlier than rest of the population and face discrimination, prejudice and stigma along with their family members. There is a strong link between physical and mental disorders, specially with Diabetes, Hypertension, Heart Disease, Cancer and Accidents apart from addictions. Similarly many subclinical syndromes, stresses and problems of living or relationships have a huge impact on the overall economic and happiness indexes. The economic and human cost from mental illnesses to the society is tremendous and thus World Economic forum has for the first time ever appointed a Global Agenda Council on Mental Health.

It is seen that there are many links of computer sciences, neurosciences, genetic and health frontiers with culture, social issues and spirituality which shapes causation and management

of Mental Health issues. There are thus many stakeholders to improving mental health and well-being of the communities, society and nations. It is thus imperative that we start a movement to empower the public at large and all stakeholders – judiciary, law enforcers, politicians, bureaucrats, policy makers, administrators, physicians, spiritualists, families and users of health services and many more.

WPA under the leaders of the President, Dr. Dinesh Bhugra, the executive and office bearers apart from focusing on spearheading the amelioration of mental illnesses and enhancement of health and well-being have identified five parallel themes:

- domestic gender-based interpersonal violence;
- child sexual, physical and emotional abuse;
- prisoner mental health care;
- mental health care of underserved groups such as elderly; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender; those with intellectual disabilities, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; and
- mental health promotion for all.

The 'Public Education Initiative' globally envisages:

- Engaging the media, NGOs, stake holders and caregivers towards public education and stigma reduction.
- Comprehensive culturally sensitive audio video and print material in various languages.
- Involvement and sensitization of all, specially those having mental health issues and their families in management after becoming aware.
- Utilizing our circle of influence in organizations, workplace and society for focus on mental health.
- Pooling in of meagre resources (monetary and professionals) for improving mental health and well-being in the world.

We seek your support to be a part of this international movement to provide 'Mental Health for All, for Life' in all settings, all individuals and groups in all countries. You are welcome to receive more information at [wpanet.org](http://wpanet.org) and connect with WPA (all psychiatric organization and their members in all the countries of the world are members of WPA) or email at [wpapubliceducation@gmail.com](mailto:wpapubliceducation@gmail.com).

Let Mental Health and Mind retain the focus it deserves and be where it belongs—right in the centre. □

—Dr Avdesh Sharma, International Lead, Public Education Initiatives, World Psychiatric Association