

Document Title: **Session Held at WPA Regional Virtual Conference, Saint Petersburg, Russia May 16-18, 2021**



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Capacity-building is an integral part of the WPA Action Plan 2020-2023. In this regard, the Working Group on Medical Students was created to promote psychiatry among undergraduate students. This working group is involved in number of initiatives around the world.

On May 17, the chair of the WPA Working Group on Medical Students, Professor Muhammad Waqar Azeem, led a session titled “Promoting Psychiatry among Medical Students: WPA Initiative” at the WPA Regional Conference Saint Petersburg, Russia. The conference, Interdisciplinary Understanding of Co-Morbidity in Psychiatry: From Science to Integrated Care, was held virtually May 16-18 and was well-attended locally and internationally.

There were three presentations within Professor Azeem’s session.

The first presentation, titled “All-Russian Mental Health Educational Program for University Students,” was led by Dr. Natalia Treushnikova, founder and president of the Union for Mental Health of Russia, and Dr. Olga Pazyna, vice president of the Union for Mental Health of Russia. The speakers presented the innovative All-Russian Mental Health Educational Program for University Students, which aims to raise awareness of mental health among medical and non-medical students at Russian universities via modern approaches to prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of mental and behavioral health disorders. The Union for Mental Health has signed cooperation agreements with 65 universities in Russia to promote this program. Since the beginning of 2021, more than 7,000 medical and non-medical Russian students have increased awareness on mental health.

Professor Petr Morozov, secretary-general of WPA, led the second presentation, titled “New Approaches to Attract Undergraduates to Psychiatry.” Professor Morozov provided an overview of the availability of psychiatrists in different parts of the world, described initiatives under his leadership to promote psychiatry in Russia and globally, and shared comprehensive recommendations to promote psychiatry among medical students. He also shared that the journal *World Psychiatry* has been translated into the Russian language for last 10 years and has involved and motivated number of young psychiatrists.

The final presentation was titled “Mental Health and Medical Students in Pakistan” and was delivered by Professor Imran Ijaz Haider, professor and chair, Academic Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences at Fatima Memorial Hospital in Lahore, Pakistan. To promote psychiatry among medical students in Pakistan, a one-day event was held in February 2020 in Lahore. More than 120 medical students participated in the event, which featured local and international speakers. Pre and post surveys showed positive results regarding interest in psychiatry among medical students. More events like this are planned in the future, he said.

Professor Afzal Javed, president of WPA, provided brief remarks at the end of the session. He emphasized the importance of promoting psychiatry among medical students and praised the speakers as well as the efforts of WPA Working Group on Medical Students.

Professor Azeem concluded the session after a question-and-answer period.