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Author: Dan Siskind  
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## **World Psychiatric Association – Section on Comorbidity 2024 Annual Report**

Section Co-Chairs: Dan Siskind & Norman Sartorius Deputy Chair: Najma Siddiqi Secretary: Susanna Every-Palmer Report Submitted By: Dan Siskind and Susanna Every-Palmer Date: April 2025

### **Overview**

The WPA Section on Comorbidity continues to advance global knowledge, research, and clinical understanding of comorbid psychiatric and medical conditions. In 2024, we expanded our membership, deepened international collaborations, and actively contributed to academic and policy discussions around the growing impact of comorbidity in psychiatric care.

### **Background**

The WPA Section on Comorbidity of mental and physical disorders came into existence in 2016. The proposal for its creation argued that it is important that the World Psychiatric Association takes action concerning the physical illnesses of people with mental illness because comorbidity leads to premature death of people with mental illness and significantly decreased quality of life of the sufferers. The program of the Section will include the organization of scientific symposia and other meetings during the World Congresses of Psychiatry, during other scientific meetings and independently, the development of educational materials and webinars concerning comorbidity and its management and the production of WPA position statements based on evidence about comorbidity and outlining WPA position on the matter.

### **Terms of reference of the WPA Action Working Group on Comorbidity**






1. To identify topics related to comorbidity of mental and physical disorders and develop recommendations for WPA's involvement in research, education and service development relevant to dealing with problems related comorbidities of this type
2. To identify individuals and centres interested and willing to participate in WPA's program of research and education related to the comorbidity of mental and physical disorders
3. To liaise with other WPA Action Plan Working Groups with a view to ensure that problems of comorbidity are considered in the work of these groups
4. To propose the organization of symposia, workshops and other types of meetings

5. To prepare reviews of evidence and drafts of position papers

6. To create training programs

## Key Activities in 2024

The Section Officers met quarterly throughout 2024 to progress the work plan of the Section. The current Section Officers are as follows:

Co-Chair:		<b>Norman Sartorius</b>	<b>Switzerland</b> Email: <a href="mailto:sartorius@normansartorius.com">sartorius@normansartorius.com</a> Phone: 41 22 788 2331
Co-Chair:		<b>Dan Siskind</b>	<b>Australia</b> University of Queensland Faculty of Medicine Woolloongabba Community Health Centre Level 2 Mental Health, 228 Logan Rd Woolloongabba, QLD, 4102 AUSTRALIA  Email: <a href="mailto:d.siskind@uq.edu.au">d.siskind@uq.edu.au</a>
Deputy Chair		<b>Najma Siddiqi</b>	<b>UK</b> University of York & Hull York Medical School Department of Health Sciences Room A/RRC/203b, ARRC Building University of York, Heslington, YORK, YO10 5DD, UK  Email: <a href="mailto:najma.siddiqi@york.ac.uk">najma.siddiqi@york.ac.uk</a>
Co-Secretary		<b>Susanna Every-Palmer</b>	<b>USA</b> Head of Department   Department of Psychological Medicine University of Otago, Wellington  Email: <a href="mailto:susanna.every-palmer@otago.ac.nz">susanna.every-palmer@otago.ac.nz</a>
Co-Secretary		<b>Giovanni De Girolamo</b>	<b>Italy</b> Email: <a href="mailto:gdegirolamo@fatebenefratelli.eu">gdegirolamo@fatebenefratelli.eu</a> Phone: +39 0303 50 1590

## 1. International Collaborations & Publications

Section members collaborated on cross-national research exploring the complex, bidirectional relationships between mental and physical health, including:

- Major depression and metabolic syndrome
- Anxiety disorders and cardiovascular risk
- Psychosis and substance use

These contributions appeared in high-impact journals, reinforcing the relevance of comorbidity in psychiatric practice and public health. We thank all members who shared their publications related to multimorbidity. A compilation of key publications is available here: [Section of Comorbidity Publications](#)

Membership also grew significantly, from 23 members in 2023 to 84 members in 2024, reflecting the increasing global interest in this field, and efforts by section officers to recruit experts in the area from round the world.

## **2. WPA Congress Participation**

We hosted well-attended sessions at the 2024 WPA World Congress in Mexico City, which generated rich discussions and helped shape future research priorities, particularly around implementation science and integrated care. Highlights included: a "State of the Art Session" on Comorbidity, delivered by Richard Holt and chaired by Ivona Šimunović Filipčić and Gerhard Heinze and the WPA Section on Multimorbidity Symposium on 17 November 2024 featuring presentations by Ivona Šimunović Filipčić, Richard Holt, David Cawthorpe, and Asiful Haidar Chowdhury. The session was chaired by Norman Sartorius and Ivona Šimunović Filipčić.

Our Co-Chair Norman Sartorius enjoyed meeting with many Section members. For those who missed it, we hope to reconnect at the next Congress.

Looking ahead, we are planning a strong presence at the 2025 WPA Congress in Prague, including: a pre-Congress workshop, a section symposium, and a section annual meeting.

To better reflect the evolving scope of our work, we are in the process of renaming the Section, the 'Section on Multimorbidity'.

## **Acknowledgements**

We extend our sincere thanks to all Section members for their ongoing contributions, particularly those who led key research and collaborative initiatives this year. Special thanks to: the WPA Secretariat for continued support; our colleagues across other Sections for their collaborative spirit; and to Nicky Traynor for administrative assistance and coordination.

We look forward to building on this momentum in 2025 and continuing to advance the understanding and management of multimorbidity in psychiatric practice.

For more information or to get involved, please visit our WPA Section page or contact the Section Secretary [susanna.every-palmer@otago.ac.nz](mailto:susanna.every-palmer@otago.ac.nz)