

WPA statement – Dr Valsamma Eapen

I am a (child) psychiatrist with research, teaching, and clinical credentials. Having worked in India, UK, UAE and now in Australia, I have a keen sense and awareness of the global challenges facing Psychiatry. My current work is focussed on addressing health/health care inequities in mental health service delivery including developing and testing innovative care models. I believe the WPA platform will enable scaling up of prevention measures such as increasing awareness, health literacy and also upskill primary care and community workers to identify and support mental health issues as and when they emerge; not just early in illness but early in life.

I have a particular interest in timely access to mental health services with a focus on children from disadvantaged backgrounds. A critical barrier in this regard is the early identification with an “inverse care law” in operation, whereby the most marginalised and the most at risk are least accessing preventative and health promotion programs. To address this, I developed the ‘Watch Me Grow’ electronic platform for early identification of developmental and behavioural/emotional problems and I am currently trialling this universal developmental surveillance program in several countries including India, Middle East and South East Asian countries.

I have been involved in teaching/training of next generation of medical graduates and psychiatrists for over 20 years including the International Child Psychiatry Fulbright Mentorship Program for medical students; developmental and intellectual disability training for health professionals in Vietnam (USAID funding); upskilling health professionals in the Pacific countries via RANZCP and the Pacific Study Group through the Ophelia program, a lunch time weekly mental health training session for health professionals from the Pacific countries; preconference workshop training during the Pacific Medical Association Conference in Cook Island; child mental health training for primary care and paediatric staff in Cambodia in collaboration with Ministry of Health; supporting Advanced Training in Child Psychiatry in Iraq in collaboration with the Scientific Council of Psychiatry and the Iraqi Board of Medical Specializations, to name a few. Further, my book “Where There is No Child Psychiatrist” is being used to upskill health professionals internationally with a focus on developing countries. I have contributed to the MindEd UK Department of Health program, a free educational resource on young people’s mental health, and involved in the dissemination of child mental health learning resources in my role as Editors-in-Chief for the IACAPAP e-textbook 2nd edition.

I currently hold relevant national (Chair, Binational Faculty of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, RANZCP) and international (President, International Neuropsychiatric Association) roles and in my first WPA term over the last 3 years, I have contributed via Scientific Committee of WCP in Mexico (2024), Prague (2025) and the forthcoming meeting in Stockholm and I have recently been appointed as special advisor to the WPA President & the Secretary General. I believe that working with WPA will allow me to broaden the influence and improve the quality and global reach of mental health training and service delivery in collaboration with the international Psychiatry community with a focus on Oceania.