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# WASP NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2020

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## Editorial

### Covid 19 and after: Challenges and opportunities



Covid 19 pandemic has traumatized the whole world since March 2020 with its spread across all the countries, whether rich or poor. Lockdowns across the world and increasing use of virtual platforms had had their own adverse psychosocial and economic consequences. Attempts at finding an evidence based effective treatment are still to succeed. Research at finding a vaccine has shown some results with some vaccines being introduced in high-risk populations and the healthcare workers. However, till date, respiratory hygiene and social distancing remain the two most effective preventive strategies. Use of online platforms in teaching, healthcare, management and business introduced during the pandemic has become a norm.

With the 2021 coming in and 2020 almost gone and lost in the Covid crisis, what opportunities we see in post-Covid period, becomes important to visualise. Covid-19 has given a number of lessons about how to (and not to) deal with a pandemic. Warnings of any health crisis should not be taken lightly, since even strongest healthcare structures may not even be able to sustain the healthcare load.

Post-Covid world is going to be somewhat different than the pre Covid period. The pandemic has taught us the importance of respiratory hygiene. Eastern ways of greetings like *Namaste* or bowing have proven safer than the handshake. We are becoming more accustomed to using virtual platforms in businesses, teaching, healthcare, research and in many other establishments. But this has also taken a toll on social relationships especially in the interpersonal dimension. Virtual platform can be used in many situations but can't replace the human touch and empathy in personal communications. Similarly, teleconsultation in medicine can help in maintaining follow up care and clinical supervision, but can't replace physical examination and surgical interventions. In health care, an empathic relationship between the clinician and the patient is crucial for the positive outcome in treatment. Similarly, parenting, learning of different skills during the growing period, farming, manufacturing industry, entertainment and sports, tourism, religion, and so on, so many sectors of the human existence can't run in virtual world, and each have their own role.

There are challenges to recover from the losses suffered in the pandemic including the personal ones, and to use the learnings gained in future, especially optimal use of the virtual technologies, and not to repeat the mistake of taking the warnings of a pandemic in a lighter mode. The virtual world can never replace the in-person world, which is essential for human existence, especially the healthy human existence.

The Dec 2020 issue of the WASP Newsletter is coming after a gap of 9 months. The pandemic has been responsible for the delay to some extent. We have been able to get relatively larger number of contributions. Professor Eliot Sorel, the senior most past president in

(...contd)

(...contd) the WASP Past Presidents Council talks about the hopes post Covid especially in the background of the vaccines being introduced for protection against Covid.

Professor Rachid Bennegadi, President WASP, discusses about the pandemic from a global perspective suggesting need for a global dialogue especially in dealing with the worldwide health crisis produced by the Covid-19 pandemic. Professor Vincenzo Di Nicola discusses the challenges imposed by the pandemic giving examples of the tragedies face in the pandemic and similar kind of disastrous events in the past. We have scholarly contributions from Professor Tom Craig, Professor Driss Moussaoui and Prof Roy Abraham Kallivayalil. Dr Andrew Molodynski, Hon Treasurer, very well summarizes the situation across the world in terms. Professor Debasish Basu details about the special issues of the World Social Psychiatry and the challenges ahead in background of the pandemic.

We have got contributions from many members societies and sections including from Argentina, Germany, Japan, India, Nepal and Morocco.

In the end, I would like to thank all the contributors and the WASP EC for their support. I would also like to thank my colleague Dr Siddharth Sarkar, Associate Professor of Psychiatry in my department for his hard work in bringing out the WASP Newsletter and also Professor Vincenzo Di Nicola, my Co Editor for his valuable inputs in editing of the Newsletter

Wishing you Happy New Year and good health,

**Rakesh K Chadda**

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**Lessons to be Learnt from the Covid Pandemic**



At the present time we shouldn't limit our dialogue to physical health and mental health, instead we must address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic from a "global perspective". Meaning that we must take into consideration some unprecedented factors that I'll be mentioning further down.

In addition, today more than ever, it is important to express our arguments as clearly as possible in order to avoid confusion and other vagaries of communication as these currently speak louder than scientific, epidemiological and biological explanations. Due to our new digital culture and the sensational news broadcasted on social media, virology has become everyone's field of expertise. This unavoidable reality must be taken into consideration, so that we do not fall into the pitfalls of denial or projection. Instead we could try to study the effects of the pandemic by doing an extended analysis of individual human beings, the society they live in, and the health facilities available in each country.

First, we shall begin by making one uncomfortable observation. There is no such thing as a global dialogue on this pandemic. Leaving political and economic ideologies aside, it has proven to be a difficult endeavour since we haven't had a global council to analyse, sort, explain and decide the health risks and the global stakes of this pandemic. We shouldn't get our hopes up because it seems we're still far away from this much-needed strategy that would benefit science and would contribute to the prevention of future pandemics. International organisations like the WHO are often limited to a role of prevention but it is far from achieving unanimity on decision-taking matters which is what we currently need. That being said, we're in need of cognitive and emotional strength in order to practice decentralisation, a compulsory action for the credibility of statements, and decisions made in today's context.

The scarcity of masks, the challenges of testing for COVID-19, the hesitation to vaccinate when it'll be finally available, as well as the disregard of the preventive measures, do not have the same social impact as the global economic recession as a result of the global sanitary crisis. At an individual level, the priority is certainly to avoid any risk of infection and to survive in case of a serious infection. It is undisputed that human life is superior to any other sociological, political or economic aspect.

It won't be through dialectical arguments that we'll manage to overcome this global health crisis. In this regard, I propose a dialogical approach, developed by Edgar Morin. It is a more subtle and useful approach because we can acknowledge two events by accepting conflict and different outcomes, without reducing them to a dialectical synthesis but rather identifying the paradigms that would make sense in their pragmatic conclusions. These conclusions would back up practical decisions fitted to each unique consequence of the pandemic on a particular social group. This way we do not sacrifice the individual person to the group, instead we associate the given strategies that appear to be scientific and humanistic strategies. If we want the people in question to be involved, then we must avoid multiplying contradictory debates along with sensational controversies that generate confusion rather than promoting adherence. This has allowed it to take more advantage than any thing else with other rational aspect, the only thing that matters these days is the "buzz".

It would be delusive to try to prevent information manipulation, a terrifying banality, without having an impact on freedom of speech and freedom to inform. And yet people's lives are at stake regardless of who is associated with it. A dialogical and systemic approach will allow us to avoid the exhausting compilation of fake news and conspiracy theories that are in fact a perfectly logical reaction to prevailing disinformation, along with anxiety and the awakening of archaic fears deeply registered in each of us. Physical health, mental health and social health are inseparable, and every statement that ignores these ongoing interactions do not contribute to humanity.

The effort of acknowledging a dialogical approach was also made by the great French philosopher Paul Ricœur. It is an innovative action against competent and incompetent opinions, fake news and the impressive broadcast they get on social media, that once again will never be regulated. This modern philosophical approach will certainly help us to contain the awakening of archaic instincts whose damages to humankind we already know.

### **Rachid Bennegadi**

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## **The Coronavirus Epidemic as a Modern Morality Play: Challenges for Social Psychiatry**



One of the cruelest aspects of our current predicament with the Covid-19 pandemic is that family members cannot accompany their loved ones during their dying days in hospital and are denied even the capacity to mourn together or to bury their dead. This image from March of this year of army trucks hauling bodies out of Bergamo in Italy because the cemeteries and crematoria are overwhelmed beyond capacity is a haunting one.

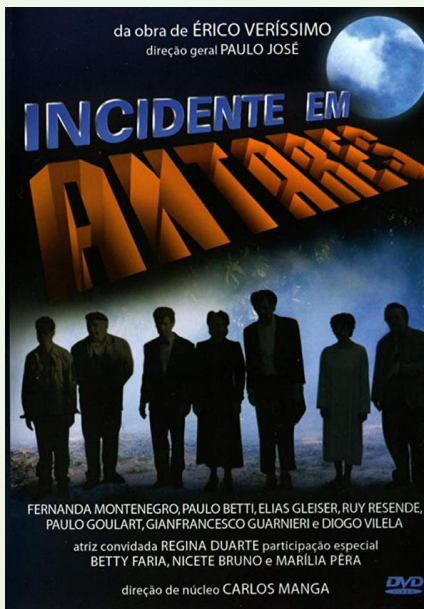


*Army trucks carrying coffins out of the city of Bergamo in Italy, March 2020*



*Antigone with the body of her brother Polynices - Nikofores Lytras, 1865*

This brings to mind Sophocles' tragedy of Antigone who was forbidden to publicly mourn or properly bury her dead brother Polynices because of his treason against the ruler Creon.



*Incident at Antares (Poster for Brazilian TV Miniseries, 1994)*

In a modern novel set in Brazil, Érico Veríssimo described the “Incident at Antares” (1971, filmed in 1994), the fictional town of Antares where the graveyard workers go on strike. As the bodies pile up, unburied, seven corpses from a wide swathe of society rise up to claim their right to be buried. When they are unheeded, they disclose the sordid secrets of those in authority and the other townspeople.

In our contemporary tragedy, we are the unwitting actors of this modern morality play where not even death is a liberation and public mourning and a decent burial are forbidden. At a loss for explanations and solutions, we turn to those whose imaginations have prepared us beforehand – artists and humanists. Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben provoked a polemic this year when he asked about the social impact of lockdowns, with governments reaching for power during a state of exception, and raised even more disturbing questions about the value of the survival of “bare life” when all human interactions and dignity are denied by what he characterized as “techno-medical despotism” (Caldwell, 2020).

Historians have noted that pandemics are more disruptive and transformative of societies than wars or revolutions. With this pandemic still in full force, we are living the first impacts of that grim historical precedent. What will come out of this predicament? My colleagues have rightly pointed to the lack of a global dialogue on the pandemic and the need for a dialogical approach (Rachid Bennegadi), the impact on children and families (Tom Craig) and on older people (Roy Kallivayalil), as well as the social nature of the pandemic (Andrew Molodynski) balanced by the hope of Covid-19 vaccines (Eliot Sorel). The WASP leadership has reached out with a special issue of *World Social Psychiatry* on the Covid-10 pandemic under the editorial leadership of Debasish Basu and a WASP webinar on mental health and well-being during the pandemic. Virtual platforms as Rakesh Chadda notes here may well be a lasting legacy of the pandemic, softening our confinement and isolation.

Nonetheless, I have different concerns as a child specialist and as a humanist. The daily lived experience of children and youth, their presentations in the clinic, and emerging studies point to the probability that this generation will be marked by the Covid-19 pandemic in ways that may surpass our instruments of measurement or capacity to imagine (de Girolamo, et al., 2020; Di Nicola & Daly, 2020). The socio-political calculus between general lockdowns for our protection versus evidence-based targeted specific interventions is a tenuous one because the available information is incomplete and because of a clash of values, highlighting the limitations of both medical knowledge and political leadership. As a social philosopher, I am concerned that this crisis like others before it will grant emergency political powers which even benign democracies will be reluctant to give up, starting with my own country of Canada. Like many of us, I have contributed to many fora on the pandemic, yet what strikes me is the “business as usual” approach with little innovative thinking, undue politicizing and baseless positive messages, falsely assuring populations for political or social reasons. The few truly encouraging signs of a healthy response are the fast-tracking of a vaccine (as Eliot Sorel notes) and the growth of Brazil’s low-tech and effective Integrative Community Therapy (ICT) online on a larger scale (see Barreto, et al., 2020).

We are indeed living through a modern morality play that may well mark an entire generation, change societies, and cast a very long shadow for years if not decades to come. Social Psychiatry as a movement and as a group of member associations under the aegis of WASP must rise to this challenge.



With our season's greetings to all our friends and colleagues throughout the world.

### **Vincenzo Di Nicola**

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### **Learnings from Covid-19**



As we come towards the end of the year, a year most of us will want to forget, I wish everyone reading this a happy and safe 2021. Covid has caused enormous suffering in all countries and the economic impact will unfortunately have profound effects on both the mental health of the population and the services that support them.

The pandemic has highlighted just how ‘social’ psychiatry is in terms of the effects of social happenings on our mental health at a personal and a national level. It also highlights the profound inequalities that people with mental health problems experience in their lives and the unacceptable tolerance of this in many countries, including wealthy ones.

I believe it is crucial that WASP is in the vanguard of this civil rights issue and the attempts to reduce these inequalities. Hopefully it will be key theme at the WASP 2022 congress, but we cannot afford to wait until then and through our connections and through our excellent new journal, *World Social Psychiatry*, we can continue to raise concerns and awareness and try to bring about change.

On a more prosaic note, thanks to all the member societies that have paid their annual fees. We will use this money responsibly to further the cause of people with mental health problems and continue the fight for genuinely person centred and holistic care that respects people's human rights.

### **Andrew Molodynski**

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## What a year 2020 has been!



The whole world has been shaken up to its core by a virus of about 100 nanometres in diameter. Human beings lives have been devastated, along with economies and ecosystems, by this COVID-19 pandemic. However, in addition to exposing the ‘chinks in the armour’ of these, the pandemic has also exposed the structural and social inequities and their effects on mental health of all – those who have been infected, and all those who have not (yet) been infected but living under the shadows of infection – the caregivers, healthcare and other frontline workers, and the general population at large. This is where

social psychiatry comes to the forefront. This is our challenge as socially oriented mental health professionals.

World Social Psychiatry, the flagship journal of the WASP, has risen to this challenge by coming out with a special issue of the Journal, themed: **COVID-19 Pandemic and Social Psychiatry – Lessons Shared, Lessons Learned**. This issue is truly a global collection of articles from all the continents of the world, from many countries of the world, focusing on their COVID-related problems, social psychiatric aspects, and potential solutions. The entire issue and all its articles are free to read and download, just like all the articles of all the issues of the Journal. Please visit [www.worldsocpsychiatry.org](http://www.worldsocpsychiatry.org) for more details.

We need to carry the torch forward, not only about the pandemic related social psychiatry but also social psychiatry in general, focusing broadly on the interactions between human beings and their ecological environments and the mental health aspects of these interactions. Please submit your articles – original research, reviews, perspectives, reflections, debates, advocacy and opinion pieces, for spreading the mission and vision of the Journal and of the social psychiatry movement.

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## Time to be wiser



Resilience is not only resisting the effects of trauma; it is finding a way to become better. Covid-19 pandemic is a challenge to all of us, but if we look at the past, smallpox killed one infected person in three during centuries. More recently, AIDS pandemic, still ongoing, killed from the beginning till now half of the infected persons. Of course, we need to be aware of the dangers of Covid-19, especially for vulnerable people. However, it is not wise to panic, for a number of reasons, one of them being that extreme stress lowers the immune capabilities of the individual and makes the coronavirus more probable, and in this case more severe.

Controlling one’s anxiety may lead to a way to find opportunities to improve life. How many people used to say: ‘I am not physically exercising, because I have no time’. Time is plenty now and not exercising endangers one’s health. How many used to say: ‘I have no time to take care of my diet’. Work from a distance gives more time to choose and to prepare better food, knowing that obesity and diabetes are risk factors for severity of Covid-19. We used to speed up in our lives, with the certainty that ‘time is money’. Running all the time sends most of the energy of the individual to the muscles, not to the brain. Today, Covid-19 is a unique opportunity to slow down, to think and to plan for a better life. This is the true meaning of resilience.

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WASP Past-president

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## New Science, New Hope: The Synthetic m-RNA Covid-19 Vaccine



Citizens of several countries are breathing a sigh of relief this week as the daring and unique synthetic messenger RNA (m-RNA) COVID-19 vaccine is being launched in Western Europe and the United States of America. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Katalin Mariko and Drew Weissberg, the lead scientists who pioneered the basic science research that led to this unprecedented, ground-breaking innovation that may save millions of lives worldwide. Such relief must be made accessible to all nations across economies.

The Covid-19 pandemic, originating in Wuhan, China in autumn of 2019, has now engulfed the whole world with more than eighty million infections, and nearly two million deceased, across generations. The pandemic has had drastic economic consequences across low-, middle-, and high- income economies, dramatically illustrating the interdependence between the nations' economies and populations' health.

Vaccines are one of the most effective, efficient, and cost-effective public health tools for populations health, nationally and globally. Public health depends on public trust. A successful COVID-19 vaccine implementation is *sine qua non* toward a resolution of the current pandemic and the revival of the countries' economies. The vaccination campaign's success must be predicated on it being part of a national plan of continued health protection, promotion, illness prevention, and access to care buttressed by public trust.

As the current unprecedented, global, COVID-19 vaccination campaign is being launched, special attention must be given to populations at high risk, inclusive of healthcare workers, all frontline personnel, and underserved populations. A renewed global spirit of solidarity and generosity is called for to defeat this deadly virus will restore the global economies, and reconnect with our fellow human beings in a renewed spirit of belonging and harmony.

We also must establish a WHO early warning pandemic alert system. Such a system must have allocated adequate human, financial, and technical resources and be implemented with alacrity.

### **Eliot Sorel**

Eliot SOREL MD is an innovative global health leader, a practicing physician, and a Clinical Professor of Global Health, Health Policy and Management, and of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the George Washington University in Washington, DC. He is a former President of the World Association for Social Psychiatry, 1996-2001.

## Covid-19 and Mental Health: Reflections



In the UK as elsewhere, there has been considerable concern about the possible mental health impacts from the pandemic. Evidence of neuropsychiatric consequences, particularly from severe infections suggest longer-term fatigue and possibly various dysexecutive syndromes but the bulk of mental health complications involve depression, anxiety and PTSD (1). Much of the evidence for the mental health impact to date is anecdotal although there are some studies emerging. One of the most recent of these accepted for publication in the British Journal of Psychiatry (2) is a study of emergent depression and anxiety collected as part of the well-established Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) and a somewhat similar Scottish Family Health Study of around 10,000 people. The study shows robust evidence of increased anxiety and depression with anxiety particularly marked among young adults that might well reflect the societal response for limiting the spread of infection (lockdown and social distancing). There are as yet no robust studies of the impact on people suffering from psychotic conditions with quite mixed anecdotal and case reports most often describing the challenge of adhering to physical distancing requirements (though interestingly some patients reporting a positive benefit of having a good reason for social isolation)

In the UK, while intensive care facilities came close to being overwhelmed in the first wave of infections (March-May) and a great deal of routine health care was delayed and cancelled, the consequences of our current 'second wave' has been somewhat less calamitous (though still around 1 million infections and 19,000 deaths since October and continuing to show a marked excess of deaths among ethnic minorities). The provision of PPE has been more reliable, mental health teams have become more familiar with using remote technology for assessments and routine follow-up and some service delivery has been modified as for example, a relaxation in the frequency of clozapine monitoring for people who are well established in treatment. There has also been a modest uptake in the delivery of online psychological therapies.

Looking forward we now have a long winter ahead. The general public, especially the young, are increasingly angry at the continued social restrictions and under pressure, the government has announced some relaxation in the rules over household mixing for Christmas. There is considerable hope invested in the new vaccines that may allow a return to social mixing.

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## **Covid-19 and Mental Health: Life beyond the pandemic for older persons**

October 1 is the international Day of older persons. On Oct 1, 2020 a special function was organised in association with the National Alliance for Mental Health- India and World Association for Social Psychiatry at the Pushpagiri Institute of Medical Sciences, Thiruvalla, Kerala observing Covid-19 protocols.

Prof Roy Abraham Kallivayalil, Immediate Past President of the WASP delivered the key note address. Excerpts: This day was approved by the UN General assembly on December 14, 1990. Oct 1, 2020. This year marks the 30th year of observance. Theme this year is “Leave no one behind”. Oct 1, 2020 is also the first day of the decade of Healthy Ageing, under the auspices of UN and WHO. Covid-19 and Mental Health: Life beyond the pandemic for older persons will be a special focus at our Institute.

The WHO statement, “COVID-19 is changing older people’s daily routines, the care and support they receive, their ability to stay socially connected and how they are perceived. Older people are being challenged by requirements to spend more time at home, lack of physical contact with other family members, friends and colleagues, temporary cessation of employment and other activities; and anxiety and fear of illness and death – their own and others. It is therefore important that we create opportunities to foster healthy ageing during the pandemic” should engage everyone’s attention.

Kerala has special problems. Kerala is aging faster than rest of India and has got the highest life expectancy at birth of 72.5 years and 77.8 years for males and females respectively as per the SRS Report 2013-17. By 2011, 12.6 per cent of Kerala’s population was past 60 years, compared to the all India average of 8.6 per cent. By 2015, population data shows that it increased to 13.1 per cent in Kerala against the all India average of 8.3 per cent (SRS Statistical Report 2015); 15% of Kerala’s older people are past 80 years, the fastest-growing group among the old. Covid-19 has severely affected the physical and mental well being of older people in the world. This is especially so in India as well as in Kerala. The Central and State Governments should pay special attention to their problems and provide special economic packages for them. Mental health of older people during Covid times should be a priority.

The meeting also honoured Mr Vijayan Namboodiri and his wife Mrs Manjula. After his retirement as a bank officer, Mr Namboodiri has worked to propagate the message of mental health and is associated with us in many of our public mental health projects. The meeting was attended by large number of participants on- line.

### **Roy Abraham Kallivayalil**

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World Association of Social Psychiatry  
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Prof Roy Kallivayalil honouring mental health activist Mr Vijayan Namboodiri and his wife Mrs Manjula on Oct 1, 2020. Dr Joice Geo (Associate Professor) is also seen

News from Argentine Branch of WASP



I am writing to you in my capacity as President of the Argentina Branch of the World Association for Social Psychiatry WASP, with the purpose to let you know about the activity of the Argentina Branch of the WASP in the current year.

On November 26, 2020 will be held celebrate the second Conference of the Argentine branch of the WASP of Buenos Aires, Argentina, under the theme “Woman in the 21st century. From uncertainty to the resignification”. It will have with the participation of excellent exhibitors and with the assistance of the people of the community.

The conference will be held in conjunction with the association AMEPSA and the Chapter of the Argentine Association of Psychiatrists AAP called Psychiatry: Women in the 21st century. (webinar).

We also carry out together, this year with AMEPSA, scientific meetings on topics such as Uncertainty, vulnerability and abandonment. Education in times of uncertainty, vulnerability and uncertainty, Trauma and mental health and risk groups in a pandemic.

We have participated in Update Program on mental health the Argentine Medical Association AMA for medical in training, Psychiatrists, and other health professionals.

In addition, we are currently presenting on December 2020 in a congress of the specialty, activities related to an area of great importance such as Rehabilitation, recovery and Psychosocial intervention. We focus on the protection of the rights of people with mental disorders and their families.

About the topic Covid 19 and Mental Health: Life beyond the pandemic. We believe that beyond the Covid 19 pandemic, life must continue. Above all, medical controls for chronic pathologies, including mental disorders, cannot be delayed.

The theme of the year that the task force had chosen to address prior to the pandemic was the Uncertainty. Term referring both to the social, economic, political and cultural situation global and like the Argentine in particular. So we decided to continue with the topic chosen after the appearance of Covid 19 pandemic.

Finally, put the emphasis on the subject of Uncertainty it helped to people in the community and health professionals who attended just like us, to developed strategies for coping with stress, build resilience and well-being.

**Alejandra Maddocks**

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## News from German Academy for Psychoanalysis Deutsche Akademie für Psychoanalyse (DAP)

As everywhere in the world we had difficulties in 2020 because of the pandemic situation of COVID 19. The 19th international congress of the WADP was planned for the period 31.03. to 04.04.2020 in Berlin with the title **Peace and Aggression - A social challenge for psychiatry and psychotherapy** with participants from 28 countries.



The response to the topic was very good and the varied, well balanced scientific high level program included 24 key lectures (also from WASP), 60 lectures, 17 symposia and 18 workshops, Balint groups and discussion panels. The congress dinner was scheduled at the Reichstag building (Bundestag), the seat of the German parliament with a unique and spectacular view over Berlin.

Due to the worldwide spreading corona pandemic, we were unfortunately forced by circumstances to cancel the congress and initiate the reversal of the proceedings.

This was a great pity for all involved scientists and participants.

Now we are going to plan the 20<sup>th</sup> international congress of World Association for Dynamic Psychiatry in Cracow, Poland. As soon as we will know details we will of course inform the World Association for Social Psychiatry about it.

As far as our two teaching institutes (Berlin and Munich) are concerned we had to organize most of the teaching by webinar which after first scepticism turned out very well.

The group dynamic convention in Paestum in our centre in the South of Italy on the topic: "Love, friendship and creative development potential" took place from 20th to 30th August 2020 and will take place as very year from 20th to 30th August in 2021 on the topic: "Love, friendship and creative expression".  
<https://psychoanalysebayern.de/institut/tagungszentrum/casa-ammon/>

### **Maria Ammon**

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Park of the convention centre in Paestum, South Italy

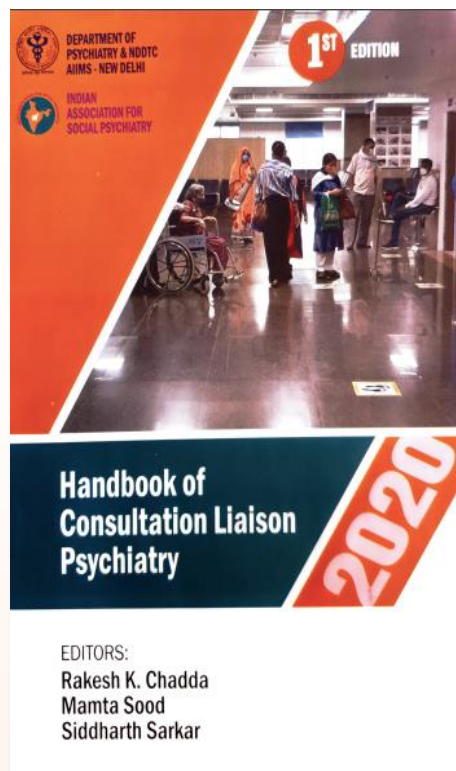
## News from Indian Association for Social Psychiatry

### Release of Handbook of Consultation Liaison Psychiatry

Indian Association for Social Psychiatry in association with All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi published a book - the “Handbook of Consultation Liaison Psychiatry: Principles and Clinical Application”. The compilation is predominantly based on the presentations made at the National CME on Consultation Liaison (CL) Psychiatry, held on 9th April 2018. The book “Handbook of Consultation Liaison Psychiatry: Principles and Clinical Application” was released by Prof. Randeep Guleria, Director, AIIMS, New Delhi on 14<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020. The book is edited by Prof. Rakesh K Chadda, Prof. Mamta Sood and Dr. Siddharth Sarkar. It discusses the concept of CL Psychiatry and its evolution around the world with a special focus to India and other low resource settings. This handbook is likely to be of use to practitioners in the field of psychiatry and other disciplines. The reading would also be of use to medical students and residents to understand interface of psychiatry and other medical/surgical departments. CL psychiatry has gradually emerged as an important paradigm of care and continues to evolve further to provide better care to patients.

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## 27<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL CONFERENCE

of the

**Indian Association for Social Psychiatry**

**Theme: COVID- 19 Pandemic and Social Psychiatry**

**24th January 2021**

(being held on virtual platform)

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## Substance Use treatment services during COVID19 pandemic: The national response in India



The unprecedented COVID19 pandemic is a significant challenge for functioning of almost all the aspects of human life including the delivery of health care services. People affected by Substance Use Disorders (SUD) are an especially vulnerable population to COVID19 infection as well as the adverse impact of measures to respond to the pandemic (such as ‘lockdown’ or ‘isolation / quarantine’).

In the early days of pandemic itself, a nationwide lockdown was instituted in India which lasted with varying degrees of ‘reopening’ for almost eight weeks. The addiction psychiatry community in India recognized the challenge and mounted a response based primarily on the twin principles of maintaining continuity of care and preventing the infection among patients and health care providers.

The first and foremost challenge presented itself in the form of sudden influx of cases of severe alcohol withdrawal brought about by the sudden restriction on the availability of alcohol.<sup>1</sup> The addiction psychiatry fraternity sprang to action and worked with the health authorities to disseminate accurate and scientific information to the general public as well as the fellow professionals.<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously – considering the lockdown measures in place and the urgency demanded by the situation – free-of-cost and easily-accessible online training programs for health professionals on SUDs were initiated (<https://naat.co.in/all-courses/>).

Yet another challenge was to maintain continuity of care for those receiving long term maintenance treatment, such as Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST). Considering that the extraordinary situation demands tilting of the balance towards ensuring treatment compliance and protecting staff and patients from the risk of infection over the concerns about possible diversion of agonist medications, it was decided to adopt more liberal approaches for dispensing of buprenorphine and methadone. Appropriate guidelines were formulated and widely disseminated among the treatment providers. This is the first occasion that methadone has been allowed to be dispensed as ‘take-home’ in India at a wide scale.<sup>3</sup> Even sublingual buprenorphine is now being dispensed as ‘take-home’ for fairly longer periods, minimizing the need to commute frequently for the patients and reduce the burden on the health staff. Early results from these reforms indicate that the patients and staff have welcomed these changes and contrary to the prevailing concerns, no reports of significant diversion and attendant adverse consequences have emerged so far.

For facilitating health-care delivery, telepsychiatry is increasing in coverage in India. However, unfortunately the existing telepsychiatry guidelines remain rather restrictive for providing prescription services for patients with SUDs. Reforms in the same are the agenda for the immediate future.

Thus, COVID19 pandemic is a crisis which has been utilized by the addiction psychiatry community in India as an opportunity to mount an effective response. Early results of these reforms are encouraging.

1 “Advisory on Alcohol Withdrawal during the lockdown”, available at

[http://socialjustice.nic.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/Advisory%20MoSJE\\_%20AIIMS%201.pdf](http://socialjustice.nic.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/Advisory%20MoSJE_%20AIIMS%201.pdf)

2 Redmond H (2020). How India Introduced Methadone Take-Homes in the Pandemic. Filter, 1 June, 2020, available at

<https://filtermag.org/india-methadone-coronavirus/>

3 Mohan, A., & Ambekar, A. (2020). Telepsychiatry and Addiction Treatment. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 42(5\_suppl), 52S-56S. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0253717620958169>

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## Covid-19 and Mental Health in Nepal: How Nepal Coped with the Crisis?



In Nepal, it all started on January 13th 2020, when the first case of novel corona virus was diagnosed. He was a 32 years old student returning from Wuhan University. And within a month slowly few other cases were also coming into light. Then, on March 11th WHO declared a state of pandemic following which, on March 25th Nepal government enforced a nationwide lockdown which lasted till July 21st.

Till December 23rd, as per Ministry of Health and Population, we had around 2,55,236 COVID-19 positive cases, out of which 2,45,709 have recovered and 1798 cases have died. The reported case fatality rate of 0.7% was lower compared to global rate. However, the lockdown enforced by the Government followed by social distancing, isolation, bombardment of news related to COVID-19 and health and economic crisis affected most of us. In a study conducted by Sigdel A et. al(2020) during lockdown in Nepal, 34.1% and 31.2% of study population were reported to have depression and anxiety respectively. Particularly, health workers were found to have 1.7 and 2 times more odds of having depression and anxiety respectively.

While COVID-19 was gradually flaring up all over the nation, the mental health burden was also slowly rising and the health workers were particularly prone to distress. So, to continue health services while ensuring the safety and health needs of the frontline health workers, the Government of Nepal stratified the hospitals for services of COVID-19 patient and a COVID-19 operational Guidance was formulated to minimize transmission risk at hospital. While, OPD services were intermittently closed during lockdown, consultations were provided through telephone or online platform. So, telepsychiatry services were introduced and adopted to reach all the people who wanted help.

During this pandemic, collaborations with NGO and INGO also aid to provide mental health support. Under the guidance of the Ministry of Health & Population (MoHP) in collaboration with WHO, TUTH and TPO Nepal the project “Supporting Mental health and psychological wellbeing of frontline Health and social care Providers” was carried out from May to November 2020. Through this project a digital platform for mental health and well being of frontline health care providers in Nepal was initiated. Along with it, for helping health workers to manage stress during pandemic, series of online training and webinars were conducted and a website called mewellnepal.org.np was designed so that health workers could do their screening for stress and seek for help through on-line consultation. Similarly, collaboration between CBM Nepal and TUTH was agreed upon targeting suicide prevention. With this collaboration, a toll free no. was launched on September 10, 2020. During these hard times, Government of Nepal held a positive stand to support mental health needs of the people. Especially, Prime Minister of Nepal Mr. KP Sharma Oli called an interaction program with psychiatrists and psychologists with an urge to increase awareness through media to reduce pessimism, negativity, fear and anxiety associated with pandemic. Though the year started with high expectations and joys of promoting tourism through visit Nepal 2020, the year has nearly ended, with all of us accepting and adapting to a new normal. While news of vaccinations has given glimpses of hope for a better future, preparing for the aftereffects of the pandemic still remains.

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## Message from Prof. Shiro Suda, the Chair of international committee of the Japanese Society for Social Psychiatry (JSSP)



Dear colleagues,

On April 7, 2020, Japanese government issued the declaration of a state of emergency in response to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which set a target of reducing people-to-people contact at least by 70 percent until end of May 2020. The government also developed a guide for avoiding high-risk situations, that is the “three Cs”: closed spaces, crowded places and close-contact settings. As a result of these policies, the number of new cases with COVID-19 had temporarily dropped below 50 per day nationwide. Owing to the extensive efforts of healthcare professionals, the mortality rate (observed case-fatality ratio) of COVID-19 in Japan is 1.4%, relatively lower than the other countries.

However, the economic recession due to COVID-19 related stagnation of stock markets and consumer activity continue to make a deep impact on the Japanese society. According to the avoiding the “three Cs” policy, citizens have been hesitating to move around and dine at restaurants, and that strikes a devastating damage to the airline industry, the railroad companies, the travel industry and the restaurant business. As a consequence, some companies and shops were forced to close down, causing a number of workers to lose their jobs and many of these unemployed are female and young. What concerns us now is that there has been a notable increase in suicide among Japanese women and young people since October 2020.

In the past two decades, a number of studies investigated the psychological impact due to pandemic (SARS, H1N1, MERS, Ebola etc.). These studies revealed that experience of isolation was associated with higher prevalence of anxiety, depression and other stress related symptoms.

Japan is now facing to the third wave of COVID-19 outbreak. The government is expected to exercise leadership to achieve a good balance between a containment strategy for COVID-19 and economic-stimulus measures. Also, a close watch on unemployed people, especially female and young, and someone suffering from isolation is of critical importance for suicide prevention.

### **Prof. Shiro Suda**

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## WASP Section on Family Intervention Programs Report

The WASP Scientific Section on Family Intervention Programs organized a successful symposium during the 23<sup>rd</sup> Bucharest WASP Congress. The Leading Team of the WASP Scientific Section on Family Intervention Programs for 2019-2022) is as follow: Chair: Dr Saïd FATTAH (France), Advisor: Pr Pierre Lalonde (Canada), Co-Chair: Pr Mathew Varghese (India), Co-Chair: Dr Yasser Khazaal (Switzerland), General Secretary: Dr Yann Hodé (France), Adjoint: Dr Hachem Tyal (Morocco), Adjoint: M. Jean-Michel Piat (France).

Our section puts a high priority on promotion and development of psycho-education in family caregivers of patients suffering from psychiatric disorders.

After the 23<sup>rd</sup> Bucharest WASP Congress our section co-organized the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the International French Speaking Profamille Network on November 21-22, 2019, in Marrakesh, with the partnership of the WASP and with a collaboration of a collective of NGOs headed by the association Chems, from Marrakesh, represented by its general secretary Mr. Hassan Hargoun. This international congress was attended by more than 300 participants; more than 75 teams were present (family caregivers and mental health professionals), from France, Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Monaco, Morocco and Romania for the first time. The WASP was represented by Prof. Vincenzo Di Nicola, President Elect, WASP and Prof. Driss Moussaoui, Past President, WASP Report can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhpXEcqRrQ>

The activities of the section were impacted and slowed down by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we tried to stay active and adapt to this new original situation. A large number of models of solidarity and collaboration between health teams and associations of users and family caregivers of people with psychiatric disorders have been developed; in particular through telephone listening interfaces, videoconferences, home visits and webinars co-organized by the WASP Section on Family Intervention Programs. Please find below some examples of webinars:

- The webinar "Role of family associations during confinement", took place on 25 July 2020, and is about the listening units and the work carried out by the associations of user families and professionals in Morocco: <https://youtu.be/Pg9A0MfeMVg>
- Many members of our section participated in the WASP Webinar on September 18, 2020
- For the commemoration of the World Mental Health Day 2020: a webinar, took place on 10 October 2020 with a Campaign theme: "Move for mental health: let's invest"
- The webinar with the theme "Mental Patients facing exclusion and stigma" took place on 11 October 2020 with the participation of AMUP (Moroccan Association of Users of Psychiatry) where I asked a former mentally ill, peer caregiver to present his testimony and his role as a link between mentally ill people and health professionals.

Dr. Saïd FATTAH

Chairman, WASP Section on Family Intervention Programs

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Contributions are welcome for the World Social Psychiatry  
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## Obituaries



### **Malik Hussain Mubbashar (1945-2020)**

Professor Malik Hussain Mubbashar, a distinguished psychiatrist of Pakistan, died on 10 August 2020, at the age of 75 years in Islamabad. Professor Mubbashar was Former Professor and Head of the Institute of Psychiatry, Principal, Rawalpindi Medical College. Vice-Chancellor, University of Health Sciences, Lahore. He is best remembered as a pioneer in the development of community mental health services. His work in the establishment of community mental health services in Rawalpindi, Pakistan served as a model for such services in low-income countries globally and particularly the WHO Eastern Mediterranean region, where specialist services were thin on the ground or non-existent. The Institute of Psychiatry at Rawalpindi was among the first WHO Collaborating Centres for Mental Health Research and Training in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, affording opportunities for professionals not only from Pakistan and the WHO Region of Eastern Mediterranean but also from across the world to learn from and replicate the community mental health care delivery model adapted to their sociocultural milieu. He was chairman of the Global Mental Health Network, Global Forum for Health Research at WHO, Geneva. During his lifetime he was accorded many honours, including two of the highest civilian awards of the Pakistan Government: Hilal-e-Imtiaz and Sitara-e-Imtiaz. WASP expresses its sincere condolences at the sad untimely demise of Professor Malik Hussain Mubbashar.

### **Fareed A. Minhas and Khalid Saeed**



### **Professor Bir Singh Chavan (1961-2020)**

The World Association of Social Psychiatry (WASP) mourns the untimely sad demise of Professor Bir Singh Chavan, Director Principal and Head, Department of Psychiatry, Government Medical College & Hospital, Chandigarh, India on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020. Professor Bir Singh Chavan was a renowned psychiatrist of India. He had many important contributions to his credit in the field of community psychiatry and rehabilitation. Professor Chavan left for heavenly abode on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020 after fighting a battle with cancer. At the time of his demise, he was also holding the position of President Elect, Indian Association for Social Psychiatry and Co-Chair, WASP Section on social psychiatry and biological therapies. He was also Organizing Secretary of the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Congress of the WASP, organized at New Delhi on 30<sup>th</sup> Nov-4<sup>th</sup> Dec 2016.

## WASP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OFFICERS



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