

# 2024 MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH ACTIVITY REPORT

Theme: Bridging the Gap: Access to Mental Health Care for All Kenyans



October 2024

### Introduction

Mental health is a critical aspect of overall well-being, yet it remains underaddressed in Kenya due to stigma, limited access to services, and inadequate public awareness. This proposal outlines the objectives and activities for Kenya Medical Association's Mental Health Awareness Month (October 2024), with key events planned from 01-12 October 2024. The goal is to raise awareness, promote mental health care, and address the existing barriers to access.

## Objectives

- Raise Awareness: Increase public understanding of mental health issues, reduce stigma, and encourage open discussions.
- Advocate for Access: Promote policy dialogues on increasing access to affordable and quality mental health services.
- Engage Communities: Involve local communities, healthcare providers, and mental health advocates in participatory activities.
- Support Healthcare Providers: Provide mental health training and resources to healthcare professionals.

#### Promote a Rights-Based Approach towards handling of mental health cases

A rights-based approach to mental health emphasises the fundamental human rights of individuals to access quality mental health services without discrimination. In this Mental Health Awareness Month campaign by the Kenya Medical Association, the prioritisation of mental health services and mitigation of stigma are pivotal components, aligning with both national and global commitments to uphold the dignity and rights of individuals with mental health conditions.

**Prioritisation of Mental Health Services:** The campaign calls for the prioritisation of mental health services as an integral part of the public health agenda, recognizing mental health as a right under the Constitution of Kenya, which guarantees the right to the highest attainable standard of health, including mental health. Despite significant progress, mental health services remain underfunded, understaffed, and geographically inaccessible to large portions of the population, particularly in rural areas. By employing a rights-based approach, this campaign seeks to address these gaps by advocating for increased allocation of government resources to mental health infrastructure, training, and service delivery.

The inclusion of healthcare providers in workshops and training sessions during the campaign aims to improve the capacity of the health workforce to deliver equitable, compassionate, and non-discriminatory services. Additionally, the campaign will focus on addressing the policy and regulatory environment, ensuring that mental health legislation is not only enacted but implemented, with a clear focus on protecting individuals from discrimination in accessing care and ensuring treatment is provided on a voluntary basis, with respect to the rights and autonomy of all patients.

Mitigation of Stigma in Accessing Mental Health Services: Stigma surrounding mental health remains a significant barrier to individuals seeking help. This stigma, often rooted in misinformation, fear, and cultural beliefs, can lead to discrimination in social, educational, and employment settings, exacerbating mental health challenges. The rights-based approach to this campaign directly confronts these barriers by promoting education, community engagement, and advocacy that challenge the negative stereotypes associated with mental health conditions.

Public awareness activities, including the media campaign, community mental health screenings, and advocacy events, will normalise conversations about mental health, making it easier for individuals to seek help without fear of judgement or societal exclusion. The campaign's messaging emphasises that mental health is a part of overall well-being and should be treated with the same urgency as physical health. Stories of recovery and resilience will be highlighted to humanise the experience of mental health challenges and demonstrate that recovery is possible when individuals receive timely, respectful, and effective care.

Moreover, the campaign focuses on rights related to dignity and non-discrimination by involving key populations such as youth, women, and marginalised communities, who are often more vulnerable to stigma and neglect in mental health services. Community leaders, religious organisations, and schools will be engaged to champion these messages, helping to reshape attitudes at a grassroots level.

By ensuring that mental health services are prioritised, and stigma is actively challenged, the Kenya Medical Association's campaign not only advocates for mental health as a fundamental right but also empowers individuals to access care in a supportive and stigma-free environment, promoting long-term well-being for all Kenyans.

# Target Audience

- General Public
- Mental Health Professionals (Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Counsellors)
- Medical and Allied Health Professionals
- Policy Makers
- Youth and Vulnerable Populations
- NGOs, CSOs, and Media Outlets

# Day 1: 01 October 2024, Webinar: Leadership and Governance

The webinar on leadership and governance focused on key areas to equip junior doctors with essential leadership skills, particularly as they navigate the complexities of their early professional careers. Here are the key learnings:

#### 1. Significance of Leadership and Governance:

Junior doctors are encouraged to step into leadership roles early to address systemic challenges such as poor working conditions, inadequate pay, and under-resourced healthcare systems. Leadership requires understanding the needs of other young doctors and having a voice in health governance and policy-making

#### 2. Experiential Learning

Dr. Marie-Claire Wangari emphasised the importance of gaining leadership experience through volunteerism and seeking leadership roles, even during medical school. She shared her journey from being a class representative to leading in various health-related organisations.

#### 3. Handling Challenges and Opportunities:

Young doctors must develop strong leadership and governance skills to manage difficult work environments. This includes navigating challenges during internships and early career stages

#### 4. Common Mistakes in Leadership:

Dr. Chris Barasa pointed out that young professionals often fail to take responsibility and shy away from difficult situations. He stressed the importance of showing up, taking responsibility, and being patient while learning from mentors

#### **5.Navigating Difficult Leaders:**

Dr. Joy Mugambi discussed strategies for working under harsh or inconsiderate leaders. She highlighted the importance of staying professional, maintaining emotional resilience, and using assertive techniques without being confrontational

#### 6. Contributing to Healthcare Change:

Panellists emphasised the importance of active participation in healthcare policy formulation, public participation in decision-making processes, and engaging with mentors to build leadership skills.

This webinar equipped participants with practical guidance on leadership development, addressing mistakes, and navigating challenging environments, while offering strategies for junior doctors to contribute to healthcare system reforms.

# **Partners and Sponsors**

#### Host



## Kenya Medical Association

Championing the Welfare of Doctors and Quality Healthcare in Kenya

Co-Host (X-Space)



#### Strategic partners (X-Space)



















# Day 2: X-Space : Global Health Diplomacy and Mental Health

Host: Dr. Marie-Claire Wangari (KMA Human Rights Committee Member)

Moderator: Dr Kagotho

Co moderator: Ms Gachambi Nderitu

#### **Panelists**

• Dr Marie-Claire Wangari

- Levi Singh
- Farhan Yusuf
- Kirwa Regan
- Rebecca Cherop
- Dr. Mercy Wanjala
- Dr. Gertrude Nasike
- Dr. Duale Raj
- Hortense Minishi
- Sharon Kiptoo
- Leshan Kereto
- Mugi Maryanne
- Maureen Akinyi
- Shiksha Arora

#### Goals

- Role of global health diplomacy in advancing mental health policies
- Challenges and opportunities in integrating mental health policies
- Lessons learnt from other mental health successes
- Important of multistakeholder collaboration
- Strengthening African representation in global mental health discussions

#### Levi Singh

Past 5-10yrs, rapid focus on mental health esp in the conversation on UHC. Declaration of future generations in mental health.

Less than 2% of global health go to mental health despite the fact that 1 dollar invested in mental health gives a 4 dollar return

Opportunities coming up;

Discussions in the post 2030 agenda regarding SDGs

- April UN commission population development discussing health for all at all ages
- World summit for Social development (discussion on post SDG)
- High level meeting on NCDs
- G20 summit in South Africa

Start thinking of how to get a more coherent focus from different member states (transnational campaigning, advocacy)

#### **Farhan Yusuf**

Importance of multi sector engagement. Private sector, engage more than monetary contributions. Include gand engage them in advocacy

This year's theme of mental health in the workplace really engages the private sector in terms of mental health and the overall productivity for the employees In the public sector there is a demand for the integration of mental health aspects esp catering to their employees needs

Engage the private sector in aspects beyond the workplace

#### Reagan Kirwa

Role of global health diplomacy in advancing mental health policies Consider health as physically, mentally and spirituality

Mental health has a malignant presence

Mental health interacts with all the SDGs

We need to bridge the miscommunication and lack of information when it comes to mental health. I in 5 know about mental health

Integration of mental health into the existing health frameworks is the way to go to bridge the gap in the various domains of health

#### Dr. Gertrude Nasike

Challenges and opportunities in integrating mental health Natural rural health policy brief (4As)

What policies are there and how are we integrating them in Africa?

What is the ease that a person can access the mental health services Access Challenges include lack of infrastructure, misdiagnosis due to lack of professionals to cater to that, affordability (poor reimbursement rates for mental health services making it difficult.

Affordability; Medical Services for Mental Health are not affordable.

Opportunities

Behavioural health integration models in our primary care to include mental health and inclusion of telehealth services, first aid on mental health

•Neglected Tropical Diseases , some of the barriers to eradication of these diseases include climate change.

Some of the programmes : Maternal Child Health Programmes , HIV Programmes , Community Support programmes , Mental Health & Psychosocial programmes.

#### Dr. Mercy Wanjala - Executive Coordinator AfroPHC

•The Power of Stories : Note that Mental Health is NOT separate from general health.

Key Takeaway Message: We should work to change the narrative on Mental Health.

#### Dr. Duale Raj

Mental Health has been stigmatised and taboo and global health initiatives focus on physical health, making mental health a secondary concern.

Integration of Mental Health in the global health agenda can be done through:

- -Creating awareness through webinars and such forums
- -Incorporation of Mental Health into existing global policies , an example is The Sustainable Development Goals
- -Collection of more data and conducting more research on the same
- -Regulation if the inconsistent policies on Mental Health across different countries
- -Incorporation of Telemedicine and additional digital tools for access of mental health services
- -Enhance intersectoral collaboration
- -Implementation of mental health training in primary health care training.

#### Mr. Leshan Kereto

Growing concern for young people who consume alcohol in addition to other drugs, due to mental health. A mental health toolkit for young people has been released and studies show that a high percentage of young people (especially in Africa) opt to consume alcohol as a coping mechanism, thus adopting harmful patterns. Suicide should be systematically handled as a mental health disorder and efforts should be out in place to mitigate this.

Key takeaway: SPEAK OUT!

#### Ms.Akwii Maureen

Global awareness and stigma reduction is important especially for diseases such as HIV / AIDS. The success , encompassed with campaigns , movements, Advocacy campaigns have contributed significantly to the reduced stigma. The above should also be applied for mental health. Coordinated Global Action , setting up global funds for Mental Health advocacy will be key in this fight. Multisectoral collaboration must be included and we can pick some lessons

from global health advocacy successes.

#### **Mugi Maryanne**

Statistically, 60% of young people and adolescents face social, economic pressures making them pre - disposed to mental health challenges. Integration of Mental health in the African Policy Agenda Is important.

Diplomacy is key in engaging with funders and sponsors while including them in policy making, in order to mitigate the challenge of lack of resources in this field. It is also important to provide mental health education in the School Health Programmes especially targeting adolescents and young people in higher learning Institutions. At the community level, the capacity building of members to ensure that interventions are culturally appropriate and responsive to the local context.

#### Shiksha Aurora

The media is a powerful tool in mental health advocacy and raising awareness. At TV47, there are shows to amplify the mental health conversation such as the TV47 Breakfast Show. Media stations should also do mass marketing for mental health campaigns and events; driving policy changes using documentaries. Mental Health stigma in Kenya may be mitigated by efforts of media personnel to report cases using the correct language

Key Takeaway: Mental Health Conversations should happen every day and the media is a key tool for mental health education with an example of podcasts.

#### Dr. Marie Claire Wangari

Key Interventions suggested by Sharon Kiptoo ( Chair of Kenya Healthcare Students Summit )

-To strengthen mental health policies, we need more mental health experts as the current ratio is 1:50000, and carry out more mental health research.

#### Key Interventions suggested by Advocate Hortense Minishi

Currently , there are legal and policy gaps currently in Kenya such as the criminalization for the attempt of suicide. There are data deficiencies and her recommendations include: Raising awareness by promoting mental health as a right, Policy reforms to eliminate stigma, Digital innovations: a nation health database system, Use of Civil Society Organizations.

## Day 3: TikTok Live: Mental Health in the Workplace

Host: Dr. Simon Kigondu, KMA President (2024-2026)

Topic: Mental health at the Workplace

Presenter Dr Simon Kigondu, President Kenya Medical Association

Hashtags #wmhd2024 #KMAHumanRights

#### **WHO** message

This World Mental Health Day, WHO is uniting with partners to highlight the vital connection between mental health and work. Safe, healthy working environments can act as a protective factor for mental health. Unhealthy conditions including stigma, discrimination, and exposure to risks like harassment and other poor working conditions, can pose significant risks, affecting mental health, overall quality of life and consequently participation or productivity at work.

With 60% of the global population in work, urgent action is needed to ensure work prevents risks to mental health and protects and supports mental health at work. It is essential for governments, employers, the organisations which represent workers and employers, and other stakeholders responsible for workers' health and safety to work together to improve mental health at work.

Action to address mental health at work should be done with the meaningful involvement of workers and their representatives, and persons with lived experience of mental health conditions.

By investing efforts and resources in evidence-based approaches and interventions at work, we can ensure that everyone has the opportunity to thrive at work and in life.

Let's take action today for a healthier future.

What are the key messages?

#### Mental Health and Work Are Closely Linked

Mental health and work are deeply interconnected, especially in healthcare. The demands of healthcare roles are high, with long hours, emotional strain, and critical decision-making, all of which can impact an individual's mental

well-being. When mental health is well-managed, it leads to increased job satisfaction, better patient outcomes, and a more sustainable workforce. Conversely, poor mental health can lead to burnout, errors, and reduced quality of care.

#### Health Workers Face Risks to Mental Health

Health workers are exposed to numerous stressors that put them at higher risk of mental health issues. These include high workloads, the pressure of dealing with life-and-death situations, and exposure to traumatic events. Over time, these stressors can contribute to anxiety, depression, and burnout. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the immense pressure on health workers, with many reporting mental health challenges due to overwhelming workloads and fear of contracting or spreading the virus.

#### Impact of Lack of Support on Individuals

When health workers do not receive adequate mental health support, the impact on individuals can be profound. They may experience emotional exhaustion, feelings of inadequacy, or even contemplate leaving their profession. Without support systems in place, health workers may struggle with personal relationships, physical health, and job performance. This can lead to absenteeism or presenteeism, where employees are physically present but unable to perform effectively due to mental health struggles.

#### Impact of Poor Mental Health on Work and Society

The consequences of poor mental health extend beyond the individual. In healthcare settings, this can lead to medical errors, reduced quality of patient care, and a higher likelihood of workplace accidents. A workforce suffering from mental health issues also has broader societal implications—longer patient wait times, decreased access to care, and higher healthcare costs. In the long term, communities suffer when health systems cannot function effectively due to an overwhelmed workforce.

#### Stigma About Mental Health Creating Barriers to Employment

One of the significant challenges in addressing mental health is the stigma attached to it, especially in high-pressure professions like healthcare. Health workers often fear that seeking help may be seen as a sign of weakness or incompetence. This stigma prevents many from accessing the support they need, leading to untreated mental health conditions that worsen over time. The result is that capable professionals may be forced out of the workforce, creating shortages in critical roles and exacerbating healthcare delivery challenges.

#### Training Managers to Support Mental Health

Managers play a key role in supporting the mental health of their teams. Training them to recognize early signs of mental health struggles and how to approach conversations about mental health can foster a more supportive environment. By implementing flexible work arrangements, encouraging regular breaks, and promoting a culture of openness, managers can help reduce stress and create a workplace where health workers feel comfortable seeking support when needed.

# Importance of Government Action and Collaborations on Mental Health of Health Workers

Governments and healthcare organisations must take the lead in creating systemic changes that address the mental health needs of healthcare workers. This includes policies that ensure access to mental health services, reducing workplace stressors, and ensuring appropriate work-life balance. Collaborations between governmental bodies, mental health organisations, and healthcare systems can bring about effective support systems and advocate for mental health as an essential component of overall healthcare strategy.

#### Health Workers Should Take Care of Their Own Mental Health

While systemic changes are vital, health workers must also prioritise their mental well-being. This includes recognizing signs of burnout, taking breaks, engaging in physical activity, and seeking help when necessary. It's essential for health workers to practise self-care and recognize that their ability to provide quality care depends on their own health, both physical and mental. Only by taking care of themselves can they continue to care for others effectively.

# Day 4 a: In-Person Speed Mentorship at the Medical Students Associations of Kenya (MSAKE) Funday

#### **Background**

The Medical Students Association of Kenya (MSAKE) invited the KMA Human Rights Committee to the Inaugural MSAKE Fun Day - Nairobi Edition - for a speed Mentorship session. This event was held at Mount Kenya University, Graduation Square in Thika and hosted over 230 medical students from the following medical schools: The University of Nairobi (UoN), Jomo Kenyatta University of Technology (JKUAT), Aga Khan University, Kenyatta University and Kenya Methodist University. The main aim of the speed mentorship session was to equip the young medical students with essential skills such as communication, encourage self - reflection and offer career guidance through practical advice from the KMA mentors and interactive discussions with the students.

#### Introduction

The KMA Speed Mentorship session at the MSAKE Fun Day steered by the KMA Human Rights Committee was scheduled for 1hr from 12pm. Out of the total number of Fun Day attendees, 190 students participated in the KMA Speed Mentorship session (83%) and we had 6 mentors, thus, the student to mentor ratio was 1:25. Each mentor was tackling a different mentorship topic (as will be illustrated in the next session) and each session lasted 10 minutes long.

#### Aims & Objectives of the Speed Mentorship Session:

Some of the aims and objectives of the speed mentorship session for medical students included:

- 1. Networking Opportunities: To Facilitate connections between students and experienced professionals in various medical fields.
- 2. Career Guidance: To provide insights into different specialties, helping students explore their interests and career paths.
- 3. Skill Development: To offer practical advice on essential skills such as communication, time management, and clinical reasoning.
- 4. Personal Development : To encourage self-reflection and professional growth through mentorship on work-life balance and resilience.
- 5. Access to Resources: To share information on academic resources, research opportunities, and extracurricular activities relevant to medical careers.

- 6. Feedback Mechanism: To allow students to receive constructive feedback on their aspirations and plans from experienced mentors.
- 7. Confidence Building: To help students build confidence in their abilities and decision-making processes through supportive dialogue.
- 8. Diversity and Inclusion: To promote understanding of diverse paths within medicine and the importance of inclusive practices in healthcare.

#### **Program**

#### **Moderators**

- Stacey Akinyi
- Valerie Rotich

#### **Speakers**

- Dr Joan Kyalo
- Dr Marie Claire Wangari
- Dr Eliud Mwangi
- Dr Eda Tatu
- Dr Paddy Mwangi
- Dr Jethro Turyabahika Ayesigye

#### Program

- Introduction
- Grouping
- Speed Mentorship
- Conclusion

#### Key message

Dr Joan Kyalo- Networking & Mentorship.

- Social networks are very important, handle your people network wisely. For mentors don't just reach out only when in need of help rather keep constant communication.
- First impressions cannot be understated in networking, work on how you dress, speak,eat the little things that speak volumes.
- Build on the skills such as Public speaking and get ready to employ them.

Dr Marie Claire Wangari- Social Media Use.

- Understand laws that govern posting on social media.
- As medical practitioners be careful what you post, consent is very crucial it saves you from legal battles and their implications

 While posting it's wise to just have a disclaimer that you're posting from your stand as a person and not wearing your professional hat to Avoid misinformation since most people look up to us and believe what we post to be true.

#### Dr Eliud Mwangi - Global Health.

- Global Health is a great field to explore as medical practitioners.
- Keep building your capacity and skills to handle the greater roles ahead, let opportunities find you prepared.

#### Dr Eda Tatu - Work life Balance.

- Childhood trauma affects our day to day decisions and actions in a great way.
- Understand and acknowledge any trauma that you're currently battling with.
- Find help to overcome the effects of the traumas, such as seeking for therapy.

#### Dr Paddy Mwangi- CV Writing & LinkedIn use.

- There are many resources to tap into as medical students in aligning with career goals
- Never underestimate the power of LinkedIn, have an account and get active. Its algorithms align you to interests and can help even in looking for scholarships

#### Dr. Jethro Turyabahika Ayesigye- Entrepreneurship.

- At such a time and age entrepreneurship is a topic we have to boldly embrace in the medical field.
- It doesn't have to be out of the world, start with the simplest solutions you can offer and how to monetize them.
- Failure is part of the process, don't be afraid to fail to you succeed in your entrepreneurial journey.

#### Challenges and mitigation

Shortage of time during the speed mentorship session. Participants desired
more time to engage with the mentors. Participants were encouraged to
engage the mentors after the session. Furthermore, some of the mentors
shared their personal contacts and emails for additional engagement.

#### Conclusion

The KMA Speed Mentorship session at the MSAKE Fun Day provided an

invaluable platform for students to engage with experienced mentors and explore various aspects of their personal and professional development. With 83% of attendees participating, the session demonstrated a strong interest in mentorship within the medical community. The diverse topics addressed by the mentors, ranging from networking and global health to work-life balance and entrepreneurship, offered students a comprehensive overview of the opportunities and challenges they may face in their medical careers. Through this session, students not only gained career guidance but also developed practical skills, received personal feedback, and learned the importance of resilience, self-reflection, and maintaining a strong professional network. The speed mentorship format ensured that students left with new perspectives and actionable advice to shape their future paths in medicine.









# Day 4 b: Attendance of the Chiromo Lane Medical Centre MindFest 24 (Dr. Joy Mugambi)

Company culture plays a crucial role in shaping conversations about mental wellness. A supportive culture, where leaders model openness and communication channels encourages dialogue, promotes mental health discussions. However, environments that stigmatise mental illness or prioritise productivity over well-being can hinder such conversations, causing employees to fear judgement or discrimination.

To protect employee rights while promoting wellness, organisations can implement policies like mental health days, flexible work arrangements, and confidential Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). Anti-discrimination policies and comprehensive wellness programs help ensure mental health is treated as equally important as physical health. These policies create a healthier, more inclusive work environment.

Recognizing mental wellness as a fundamental employee right means acknowledging that employees deserve a safe, supportive environment where mental health is prioritised. This includes providing mental health parity with physical health, ensuring reasonable accommodations for mental health conditions, and upholding privacy rights for employees seeking support.

Legally, organisations are required to comply with labour laws that protect mental health, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which mandates reasonable accommodations and prohibits discrimination. Occupational safety laws also require employers to address workplace stress and psychological hazards. Ethically, companies have a duty of care to protect employees from harm, foster inclusion, and create a psychologically safe work environment where mental health can be discussed openly without fear of retaliation.

By fostering a culture of openness and implementing supportive policies, companies can ensure mental wellness is both protected and promoted, benefiting both employees and the organisation.

# Project Team

National Project Leads	Affiliations & Roles	Project Roles
Dr. Joy Mugambi	1.Vice-President, Commonwealth Medical Association 2.Kenya Medical Association Human Rights Committee Convener	Principle Lead
Dr. Marie-Claire Wangari	1.Immediate Past Chair, World Medical Association Junior Doctors Network 2.Kenya Medical Association Human Rights Committee Member	Co-Lead
Dr. Ayda Wanjiku	Kenya Medical Association, Convenor Physician Well-BeingCommittee	Co-lead
Dr. Kevin Bartay	Kenya Medical Association, Co- Convenor, Young DoctorsNetwork (YDN)	Team Member
Dr. Brenda Obondo	Chief Executive Officer, Kenya Medical Association	Secretariat



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