FROM THE PRESIDENT

Suicide and Mental Illness: Collaboration with the World Federation for Mental Health

IASP and the World Federation for Mental Health will be collaborating on the World Suicide Prevention Day Campaign (September 10th 2006) and the World Mental Health Day (October 10th 2006). The theme for 2006 World Mental Health Day will be “Mental Illness and Suicide.” This is an exciting opportunity for us to promote the two days to each of the organisations’ constituencies and to promote collaborations on the two activities around the world.

We are working to develop as much consistency as possible in the key messages of the two campaigns in order to expand and influence the impact of each individually, as well as to enhance their collective impact. In light of the theme of the 2006 World Suicide Prevention Day, “With Understanding, New Hope,” we are developing many creative ideas for collaboration. These include creating the opportunity for members of WFMH and IASP to receive information packets from both campaigns and encourage their use, exchanging articles in upcoming newsletters, linking WFMH and IASP websites, sharing the podium with the other organisation at Launch Events for the two days and possibly organising and presenting a joint event on the topic in September or October. We ask IASP members to keep this collaboration in mind as they prepare activities for the 2006 World Suicide Prevention Day.

WFMH is a much larger organisation than IASP and they have many more years of experience in organising an international theme day. One important aspect of their annual World Mental Health Day Campaign is the fact that the theme they choose is used as a focus of activities around the world for the twelve months following the launch of the event on that day. Although 2006 is only the 4th World Suicide Prevention Day, the number and scope of activities around the world are growing exponentially. In the next two months we will be developing material on the 2006 World Suicide Prevention Day which will be distributed to all IASP members. This year, rather than limiting activities to the day itself and the following week, we encourage IASP members and their collaborators to incorporate this theme into a programme of activities throughout the year. Your suggestions are welcome by this year’s WSPD coordinators. Please contact me or Annette Beautrais (Annette.beautrais@chmeds.ac.nz) with your suggestions.

Brian L. Mishara, Ph.D.
mishara.brian@uqam.ca

IASP Task Force on Suicide and the Media

In recent years, most countries which have developed national suicide prevention strategies have included the development of guidelines that have attempted to promote accurate, responsible and ethical reporting of suicide in the media. These guidelines have arisen from a substantial body of evidence that suggests that inaccurate media reporting and portrayal of suicide has the potential to encourage imitative behaviour among vulnerable individuals. They are designed to promote responsible reporting of suicide, but have sometimes been mis-interpreted by media professionals as promoting censorship. Such misunderstandings about these media guidelines have led to a reluctance among many journalists to adopt them. There is a need for improved collaboration with media professionals to reach a consensus on this issue. The newly-formed IASP Task Force on Suicide and the Media is taking up this challenge.

Goals

The Task Force has the following goals:

- To improve linkages between suicide experts and media professionals;
- To systematically review research about suicide and the media (including evaluations of media guidelines), to identify gaps in knowledge, to develop a research agenda to address these gaps, and to encourage relevant research;
- To identify, collect and collate media guidelines which have been developed around the world, and examine and report on their content, development and implementation;
- To work collaboratively with media professionals to develop recommendations for developing and implementing media guidelines;
- To work collaboratively with media professionals to promote media guidelines to journalists, editors and other stakeholders;
- To provide an international body of experts that can provide authoritative comment on issues regarding suicide and the media, including issues surrounding media guidelines.

Planned activities

The above goals will be achieved through the following activities:

- Develop a ‘virtual network’ of individuals and organisations with an interest in suicide and the media (including suicide experts and media professionals);
- Review and report on suicide and the media projects, and encourage international collaborative research on these matters;
- Act as a clearing house for international guidelines on suicide and the media, and provide summary information on their content and the processes by which they have been developed and implemented;
- Produce recommendations for developing and implementing media guidelines;
- Organise symposia on suicide and the media at IASP congresses;
- Develop a section on suicide and the media on the IASP website to increase awareness of IASP members about this issue; and
- Develop a bank of experts to act as an internationally recognised, IASP-backed spokesgroup on issues relating to suicide and the media.

Contact details

The Task Force is chaired by Dr Jane Pirkis from Australia, and will be recruiting members in early 2006. Interested parties can contact Jane directly: Associate Professor Jane Pirkis Program Evaluation Unit, School of Population Health, The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010, AUSTRALIA Ph: +61 3 8344 0647 Fax: +61 3 9348 1174 Email: j.pirkis@unimelb.edu.au

Please visit the IASP website http://www.iasp.info

To enter the ‘members only’ part of the website you must use the userid: iasp and the password: oeled
You are invited to attend the Second Asia Pacific Suicide Prevention Conference, which will be held from 10th to 12th March 2006 in Singapore. The venue will be the Furama Waterfront Hotel.

We will have 9 plenary sessions with experts from the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP), Asia Pacific Region, as well as our own speakers from Singapore. There will be 6 main symposiums: Suicide in Young, Elderly, Hospital-based suicide prevention programs, Community-based suicide prevention programs, Nursing symposium, as well as an Asian Awareness Symposium.

We have 28 other parallel sessions that will cover numerous aspects of suicide eg. Psychology of suicide, effective treatment methods, hotlines, Internet and Media, Addiction, Medical-legal issues, Philosophy and many others.

We will also have two pre-conference workshops: Syngenta-International Workshop on Safe Access to Pesticides and a Living Works Workshop.

We welcome papers to be submitted for presentation at our conference. There will also be presentations by country representatives in our region to increase awareness of suicide trends and issues in the Asia Pacific region. Details may be found on our web page: www.suicideprevention2006.com.sg