I wish to welcome you all to this, our first newsletter of 2019, wherein we proudly report and reflect on a number of exciting events that have taken place across the globe in previous months.

In particular, we hear from colleagues 'down under' about the inaugural Australian Research Workshop on Suicide and Self-Harm, which took place in Brisbane in February. Attendees have reported an engaging and insightful event, involving presentations of novel research and innovative methodologies, along with the opportunity for in-depth discussions with experts. Based on the success of this workshop, we are already looking forward to next year's event!

Our global strive towards the ultimate goal of suicide reduction depends heavily on National Suicide Prevention Strategies. My colleagues and I have been working on the first National Plan for Suicide Prevention in Pakistan in recent months, details of which are presented in this issue. We also learn about the plans for a 2nd National Strategy on Suicide Prevention in Namibia, in which Professor Arensman has been an expert advisor.

IASP’s next major event this year is the 3rd Caribbean Regional Symposium from 2–4th May 2019 in Trinidad (https://iasp.info/trinidad2019). This promises to be a stimulating event, bringing together researchers, practitioners, helpline workers, programme planners, graduate students, those within the community and those affected by suicide, from a range of disciplines from within Trinidad & Tobago, the Caribbean Region, and around the world. Our National Representative of Trinidad, Dr. Gerard Hutchinson gets us warmed up for the event by providing us with details of what to expect.

I wish to take this opportunity to inform you that registration is now open for the 30th World Congress of the International Association for Suicide Prevention, which will take place in Derry-Londonderry, Northern Ireland from 17-21st September 2019. The theme of this congress is 'Breaking down Walls and Building Bridges,' which denotes the concept of overcoming barriers and progressing in our shared efforts to prevent suicide. With an extensive line-up of keynote speakers and a packed conference programme, we can expect a very stimulating and progressive event. Full details of the conference programme are available on the website: https://www.iasp2019.com

Professor Murad Khan
The Australian Research Workshop on Suicide and Self-Harm intends to follow in the footsteps of the British Isles Research Workshop established in 1993 at Oxford University, Department of Psychiatry. Like the British Isles Research Workshop, its Australian counterpart has been established so that key researchers initially throughout Australia, with the potential in the future to expand regionally, can meet annually to discuss current research. By providing this forum, all aspects of research into suicide and deliberate self-harm can be explored, shared, questioned and discussed in a closed meeting amongst respected research colleagues. These meetings are designed to empower and encourage valid new research and provide a base for mentoring across the disciplines. It provides an opportunity to share concerns and innovations in a safe academic environment with the sole purpose of promoting and establishing evidence-based science in the field of suicide and suicidal behaviour. We were very privileged to have as our guest Professor Keith Hawton.

Prior to the commencement of the Workshop, Keith provided a public lecture on 'Self-harm and Suicide in Young People' to a group of 70 plus delegates from all areas of the community including the Coroner’s Office, Police Department, Health Departments, Mental Health Commission, NGO’s, Educators, Students, Australian Bureau of Statistics and Lifeline.

The Workshop hit the ground running with outstanding, ground-breaking presentations from Professors’ Keith Hawton, Ella Arensman, Jane Pirkis and Dr Kairi Kolves on Thursday afternoon followed on Friday with largely unpublished works from Professor Eric Caine (USA), Professor Nicholas Procter, Mrs Raelene Ward, Drs. Annette Erlangsen, Katrina Witt and Andrew Page.

The next Workshop is already scheduled for February 2020, with dates and venue announcements to be made late March 2019. If you missed this Workshop and would like to be involved in 2020, please email Wendy Cliff wendycliff@iasp.info to be added to the mailing list. Invitations will be extended to New Zealand and Pacific Researchers to make this a regional event.
The launch of a National Study on prevalence and interventions related to suicide in Namibia took place in October 2018. At the launch, The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Social Services, Mr. Nangombe discussed the extent of suicide and self-harm as public health issues in Namibia, informing the meeting that by 2011 Namibia had the eleventh (11th) highest suicide rate in the world and fourth (4th) highest in Africa.

Mr. Nangombe further said that the Government of Namibia is dedicated to reducing the high rate of attempted suicide and suicide within the country. The study was necessitated by limited empirical data on the prevalence, causes and precipitating factors of suicide in Namibia. This novel research was conducted in 2016 and includes data from all fourteen regions within the country.

The study focused on the prevalence of suicidal behaviour, attitudes towards suicide, causes of suicide, knowledge and efficacy of suicide prevention and treatment efforts. The results will inform the drafting of a 2nd Five Year National Strategic Plan on the Prevention of Suicide in Namibia for the period 2018/19-2022/23, as well as the development of a policy framework to guide suicide prevention, treatment, management and coordination in the country.

Mr. Nangombe concluded by informing the meeting that the Ministry is implementing a number of preventive and treatment interventions in collaboration with other government ministries, private sector, civil society organizations and the WHO.

The study was launched as part of the Ministries activities in commemoration of the World Suicide Prevention Day and World Mental Health Day. Other activities included outreaches to different settings with awareness-raising messages including schools, churches and workplaces.
Prof. Ella Arensman visited Namibia in October 2018 on invitation of WHO to support the Ministry of Health and Social Services in drafting the 2nd National Strategy on Suicide Prevention for the country. She presented a lecture on Suicide Prevention in International Context, focusing on both progress and challenges. Prof. Arensman discussed the extent of suicide globally, referring to the lack of availability and quality of data internationally and further highlighted the need for improvement in surveillance and dissemination in order to inform action.

The challenges in developing and implementing national suicide prevention strategies were presented by Prof. Arensman, including lack of enforcement of guidelines and insufficient resources, lack of independent and systematic evaluations of national suicide prevention programmes, as well as ineffective planning, co-ordination and collaboration.

Despite challenges, Namibia is amongst the few countries with national suicide prevention programmes together with Lithuania, Guyana and Afghanistan. Namibia is currently the only country in the WHO Africa Region developing a 2nd National Suicide Prevention Strategy. The first strategy was developed by the Ministry of Health and Social Services with partners for a period of five years: 2012-2016. The mission of the strategy was to provide comprehensive, affordable and accessible services by relevant stakeholders pertaining to suicide. The strategy had 24 objectives, strengthening key areas in suicide prevention, including involvement of stakeholders, internal processes, learning and growth, and budgetary and financial aspects.

Prof. Arensman also discussed evidence informed-components of a national suicide prevention programme including strategies such as restriction of access to lethal means, establishment of public health surveillance systems for suicide and self-harm and enforcement of guidelines for responsible media reporting on suicide and self-harm. Furthermore, multi-level suicide prevention programmes prove to impact positively on suicide prevention, according to Prof. Arensman. These include community-based interventions to improve the care for people diagnosed with depression and simultaneously address awareness and skills in early identification of suicide risk among healthcare and community based professionals.

Prof. Arensman concluded by underlining the importance of evaluation as a means of increasing the effectiveness of national suicide prevention strategies. Both the IASP and the WHO can facilitate the development and implementation of national suicide prevention programmes.
A national suicide prevention strategy for Pakistan is needed now more than ever, considering the increasing rates of suicide in the country (estimated 13,000-14,000/year) and the lack of effective mental health legislation and policy.

The estimated population of Pakistan is 220 million, of which approximately 70% of individuals are aged 30 years old or younger. This cohort are reportedly most at risk by suicide and self-harm in Pakistan, particularly young single males and young married females. Cases of suicide and self-harm are largely unreported in Pakistan due to the financial cost of hospitalisation relating to suicidal behaviour, as well as the associated social stigma, religious and legal penalties. The development of a national plan in Pakistan would provide the opportunity to tackle suicide prevention in a way that is meaningful to the country’s context, specifically focusing on the identified high-risk groups.

The proposed plan has a number of major aims including increasing awareness about the magnitude of the issue and the availability of effective prevention strategies, together with reducing the incidence of suicide and self-harm and the stigma attached to suicidal behaviour. In addition, the plan aims to address risk factors associated with suicidal behaviour, to strengthen the health and social system response to suicidal behaviours, to improve surveillance of suicidal behaviour at district, provincial and national level and to improve research and evaluation of effective interventions.

At the forefront of the plan are recommendations to make suicide prevention a national priority, together with accepting the Bill to decriminalise attempted suicide into law, following substantial efforts by lobbyists in 2018, resulting in the Bill being passed by the Senate, yet failing to be presented in the National Assembly before it expired. This plan encompasses a number of additional multi-faceted recommendations including strengthening and extending provision of mental health services, promotion of suicide research and reporting to the WHO, integration of education-based programmes in schools and universities, inter-sectoral collaboration between media, law enforcing agencies, human rights organisations and religious leaders, mapping and regulation of NGOs, as well as restriction of access to means.

The recently published WHO report on National Suicide Prevention Strategies, including progress, examples and indicators is a valuable resource for governments and policy makers in countries such as Pakistan to inspire and support the development of national strategies for suicide prevention that are adapted to the target population. We look forward to following the progress of the establishment of a National Plan for Suicide Prevention in Pakistan and trust that we will be reporting on its effective implementation in the not so distant future.

On 30th November 2018, Prof. Ella Arensman presented a Train-the-Trainer programme (TtT), together with Dr Vita Postuvan, on Increasing Awareness of Depression and Suicidal Behaviour at the University of Koper, Slovenia, for professionals working in health and community bases services, i.e. gatekeepers. Gatekeepers are individuals within health and community based services who may be in a position to identify people at risk of suicide by recognising risk factors for suicide. Early identification of suicide risk is crucial in order to prevent self-harm and is the starting point of suicide prevention. Gatekeeper training has been identified as a promising component of multi-level suicide prevention programmes. Studies examining the effects of gatekeeper training consistently show that training positively impacts on knowledge, attitudes and skills of professionals in different settings, such as psychologists, counsellors, social workers, police officers etc.

The role of the Gatekeeper includes:

- Recognising warning signs of suicidal behaviour
- Keeping lines of communication open
- Encouraging help-seeking behaviour and linking to specialist services where appropriate.

This initiative involved the implementation of an evidence-based training programme aimed at increasing awareness and skills relating to depression and suicidal behaviour among healthcare professionals and community facilitators using a Train-The-Trainer (TtT) model. Healthcare professionals and community facilitators were trained during the one-day Train-The-Trainer programme to deliver a 3-hour training to colleagues in their respective work setting.

The TtT model maximises the capability and capacity of an organisation to increase workforce knowledge and skills in a sustainable and cost-effective manner. The TtT programme provides interested professionals in health and community services with the information and resources needed to deliver Gatekeeper training sessions on awareness of depression and suicidal behaviour throughout the organisation. The training provide facilitators with relevant presentation material, extensive background information, suggested formats for the training, guidance, and advice on delivery. This evidence-based programme has been developed and evaluated by the European Alliance Against Depression (EAAD), and implemented in many countries internationally. The training day was supported by the International Association for Suicide Prevention.
Welcome to Trinidad and Tobago

Although the suicide rates in some Caribbean countries are among the highest in the world according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics, the region’s health and social policy stakeholders continue to underestimate the importance of this public health and social problem. After successful regional conferences in Suriname (2013) and the Cayman Islands (2015), the IASP is pleased to host the 3rd Caribbean Regional Symposium in Trinidad from 2-4th 2019, at the Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre.

The major objective of this conference will be to catalyse the development of a functional and implementable suicide prevention policy for the countries of the region with the assistance of representatives from both the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) and the WHO and various organisations within the region working on suicide prevention. The theme is different cultures, one aim – suicide prevention. We look forward to welcoming all those attending!

Professor Gerard Hutchinson,
Co-Chair Scientific Committee,
National Representative of Trinidad
The 30th World Congress of the International Association for Suicide Prevention will be held in Derry-Londonderry, Northern Ireland, from the 17th to the 21st of September 2019.

The theme for IASP 2019 is “Breaking Down Walls and Building Bridges,” a theme that not only resonates with the landmarks in our beautiful city, but also reflects the work we do in suicide prevention and building hope for those in crisis.

Key topics to be covered at the Congress include:

- Innovation in suicide prevention and treatment
- Suicide in context
- Suicide, trauma and conflict
- Suicide in the ageing population
- Suicide and self-harm in young people
- Clinicians as survivors of suicide
- Psychological, psychosocial and pharmacological treatments of suicide risk
- The role of “big data” in suicide prevention
- Biological and genetic risk factors for suicide
- Stigma, mental health and suicide
- Postvention and lived experience
- Psychological and social risk factors for suicidal behaviour, and
- Public health approaches to suicide prevention.

In association with Visit Derry, the Western Health & Social Care Trust and Ulster University, we are delighted to be hosting IASP 2019 and look forward to welcoming you. Derry-Londonderry is one of Europe’s most popular up and coming destinations. It is a vibrant, cosmopolitan city, steeped in history and tradition. This, combined with the world famous Celtic charm and friendly hospitality is sure to guarantee an enjoyable and cultural city to visit for everyone.

Local Organising Committee, IASP 2019
Professor Siobhan O’Neill, Barry McGale & Professor Rory O’Connor

For more information on the Congress please visit: w w.iasp2019.com.

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The 52nd American Association of Suicidology Annual Conference will be held on April 24–27, 2019 at the Sheraton Hotel, Downtown Denver, CO USA.

Converging Fields, Expanding Perspectives

For more information, please visit www.suicidology.org.

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International Association for Suicide Prevention

IASP news bulletin