

WASP Position Statement on the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is unfolding into a global event on a massive scale, one of the most significant ones since the Second World War. The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting most countries across the world, regardless of their Human Development Index (the UN's HDI). The pandemic is still evolving and growing after beginning in Wuhan, China in December 2019. More than 1.9 million people have been affected across the world, with 123,010 deaths (as on 15th April 2020) attributed to the infection so far. Both these figures are rising substantially as of this writing.

The pandemic is causing great societal upheaval, affecting economies and other aspects of social organization across the HDI spectrum due to lockdowns and major challenges to health and social services. There is widespread anxiety and fear across the world and health services in many places have been almost completely diverted towards dealing with persons affected by the pandemic. Those with existing mental and substance use disorders have been particularly affected as many are isolated and lack the financial, interpersonal and social resources to deal with the crisis caused by the pandemic. Furthermore, we are already witnessing a cascade of psychosocial consequences affecting individuals, communities and entire nations, including the stigma related to the disease and myths and prejudices related to the probable origins of the pandemic.

With this catastrophic health, economic and social crisis as a backdrop, the World Association of Social Psychiatry (WASP) would like to announce its position statement on the COVID-19 Pandemic:

- WASP expresses its concern over the major threat to humanity caused by COVID-19 and offers professional expertise and support in Social Psychiatry to the world community.
- WASP appeals to its 27 member societies and specialty sections to offer expert services and support to the affected populations in their respective countries and to assist local agencies in offering psychosocial support.

- WASP will provide assistance to various professional medical societies across the world in delivering mental health care and psychosocial support services for the persons affected by the pandemic.
- WASP appeals to all professional societies in the field of mental health to provide comprehensive services in mental health care and psychosocial support in COVID-19 affected populations and act in coordination with the relevant agencies working in the area in their respective fields and geographical locations
- WASP will provide all pertinent assistance and advice to voluntary sectors across the world in developing guidelines for the provision of mental health care and psychosocial support services in their respective fields and geographical locations.
- WASP also appeals to local communities worldwide to follow the general instructions being issued by their local governments for preventing the spread of COVID-19, especially social distancing, the use of personal protective equipment such as masks, and hygienic practices such as the frequent washing of hands to contain community spread.
- Finally, WASP urges citizens to get information about all aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic only from reliable scientific sources such as the WHO and authorized local government and health services through their media and websites.

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April 15, 2020