

Dignity is a daunting challenge in mental health: WHO

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"This day is an opportunity to reflect on where we are and what we need to do to make mental health care a reality for people around the world," said Dr Poonam K Singh, WHO's regional director for South-East Asia.

Mental, neurological and substance use disorders are common all over the world, affecting every community and age group and across all income countries.

While 14% of the global burden of disease is attributed to these disorders, most of the people affected, almost 75% in many low-income countries, do not have access to treatment that they need.

"Dignity is one of the most daunting challenges in mental health," Dr Poonam added. "Dignity in mental health means steps are taken to safeguard the well-being of people with mental health conditions, thus liberating them from the shackles of self-stigma, low-confidence, low-self-esteem, withdrawal, and social isolation. To break the barrier of prejudice and insensitivity, dignity and mental health have to go hand-in-hand. We will achieve dignity for mental health when communities, families and individuals have the confidence to seek help for mental health without fear and inhibition."

WHO said that it is committed to working towards a future when people with mental health conditions will live a life of dignity, a fundamental human right.

WHO promotes a shift from long-stay mental hospitals, which is in itself stigmatizing, to care in community-based settings which are more acceptable and dignified.

"Together we need to ensure that mental health strategies, actions and interventions for treatment, prevention and promotion are compliant with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international and regional human rights instruments," ended Dr Poonam.