



STAMUN XI's Conference

Committee: World Health Organization (WHO)

Agenda: The Question of Strengthening Global Mental Health Infrastructure Post-Pandemic

Delegation: New Zealand

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The question of strengthening global mental health infrastructure post-pandemic is one that many countries are consistently urged to address, New Zealand being no exception. The existing infrastructure is severely lacking across the globe resulting in severe economic burdens related to mental health services. Unfortunately, shortages in professionals and budgets have caused significant roadblocks in the process of developing comprehensive mental healthcare models that are prepared for any given emergency or disaster.

The WHO has developed guidelines regarding the direction and creation of comprehensive mental healthcare systems. These guidelines emphasize the need for integration of mental healthcare into primary healthcare, encourage community based mental health infrastructure, and calls for an increase in coverage of services related to mental health. The WHO also strongly urges a reduction in suicide rates and an increase in reporting of mental health from all nations. New Zealand stands with the belief that human rights based care is crucial, especially post-pandemic, where many individuals had inadequate access to proper mental healthcare during a period of extreme difficulty. Historically, mental health was recognised through the development of the first lunatic asylum in New Zealand in 1854, at which point mental illness was seen as incurable. Today, though almost 50% of New Zealanders are likely to experience mental health challenges in their life (Taonga), studies show that in a system that works efficiently and effectively with adequate resources and funding, 20% of New Zealanders can and will recover from mental illness (“No Lifeline for Struggling Mental Health System in Budget, Say Psychiatrists | RANZCP”). Unfortunately, recovery cannot be achieved in the current state of infrastructure however, through the development of the Mental Health Infrastructure Programme, New Zealand aims to increase public access to affordable and quality mental health care that encompasses all needs and considers long term plans for patients.

Furthermore, New Zealand acknowledges the flaws in the current systems with human-rights abuses in inpatient facilities and the patient and staff trauma exacerbated by the inherent volatility of acute psychiatric settings. Therefore, New Zealand advocates for the establishment of international frameworks that consider these violations and ensure measures are taken to eliminate harm from inpatient environments – for both patients and staff. Crucially, New Zealand continues to face similar challenges as nations across the globe with a shortage of mental health professionals and a lack of funding. Thus, New Zealand calls for the creation of global partnerships and programmes that encourage the youth to make the much needed difference in this field, New Zealand also believes that the reallocation of funds in health budgets globally must be made to account for the severe lack of mental health resources and research while maintaining necessary funding in actively developing and crucial care fields. Finally, New Zealand alongside the WHO demands the immediate integration of mental health care into communities and general medicine to alleviate resource strain where appropriate to ensure all people have access to quality and affordable mental health care.

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