Dear Colleagues,

I hope this message finds you well. I would like to start by thanking you all for your hard work, which we have tried to highlight in our latest newsletter. I recognise that this is just a snapshot of the work our team has done this quarter, and that we cannot highlight everything in a single issue but we do want to share and recognise our key achievements as a team. So, I encourage you to keep sending in your submissions and to continue taking pride in your work!

Speaking of work, a key priority for Aga Khan Health Service, Pakistan (AKHS,P) is to promote an enabling environment where our people feel safe and welcome. It would serve us all well to bear in mind, when interacting with colleagues, that our values include inclusiveness, respect, and compassion. These values are not reserved exclusively for client engagement but are equally valid and important for internal interactions as well. This is why SafeCall – a professional, independent, external and confidential service for raising safeguarding concerns – remains a trusted partner.

On the subject of partnership, this quarter we launched the Taskeen mental health helpline to provide timely, accessible and confidential mental health support to people living in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral. The helpline has been launched in collaboration with the Aga Khan University’s Brain and Mind Institute, and Taskeen, a non-profit organisation that specialises in mental health awareness and counselling. The helpline will provide free-of-cost psychological support and counseling for our staff through trained psychologists from Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral who speak local languages.

I encourage you to make use of the helpline anytime you need it. The discussions you will have will remain confidential at all times, and no details about your personal situation will be shared with anyone! A huge challenge that we need to overcome – as an organisation and as individuals – is the stigma attached with poor mental health in our society. Living in a post-Covid world and faced with challenges like high inflation, political upheaval and a volatile security situation, taking care of our mental health is more relevant today than ever before. So please take the time to get the support and help you may need, when you need it.

Going forward we remain committed to our mission: Providing access to health services to people within our catchment areas and enabling access to our services for remote populations through outreach. Integrating technology in our continuum of care through telehealth is and will continue to be a core priority.

Please take moment to read through the articles in this issue of our newsletter and celebrate all that we have been able to achieve together over the past few months.

Regards,

Syed Nadeem Husain Abbas