



25TH MAY 2024



ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON MENTAL HEALTH & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MEDIA

**Key Takeaways &
Highlights**



TABLE OF CONTENTS



About Sindh Mental Health Authority	01
Welcome Message	02
About the Conference	03
Message by the Chief Guest	04
Organizing Committee	05
Keynote Speakers	06
Keynote Sessions	07
Recommendations	13
Conference Highlights	15



SINDH MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITY



The Sindh Mental Health Authority (SMHA) was established in August 2017 to implement the Sindh Mental Health Authority Act 2013, approved by the Sindh Assembly. Senator Dr. Karim Ahmed Khawaja was appointed as the first Chairman. SMHA leads efforts in Sindh Province for mental health promotion and disorder prevention.

Functions and Roles

SMHA advises the government on mental health matters, develops standards for patient care and treatment, and recommends measures to improve existing services. It focuses on child and adolescent, psychogeriatric, forensic, learning disability, and community-based services. SMHA prescribes procedures and a code of practice for mental health services, ensures regular review of assessment and treatment provisions, and oversees care, aftercare, and rehabilitation. Additionally, it regulates help lines and crisis centers, organizes public awareness programs, promotes research, and publishes educational material. SMHA also registers psychiatrists, and arranges training programs to fulfill the Act's objectives.



Dr. Karim A. Khawaja

SENATOR & CHAIRMAN -
SMHA

It is my pleasure to reflect on the successful round table discussion on "Mental Health and the Responsibilities of Media," organized by the Sindh Mental Health Authority (SMHA). This event was a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to address the critical role of media in shaping public perceptions of mental health.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our distinguished speakers, including Senator Taj Haider, Mr. Faisal Edhi, CEO Edhi Foundation, World Renowned Folk & Art Dancer Ms. Sheema Kirmani, Mr. Kazi Nazir Ahmed, I.G (Prison), Prof. Dr. Farhan Essa Abdullah, Head of Dr. Essa Laboratory and Diagnose Centre, Dr. Suresh Kumar, Prof. M. Iqbal Afridi, Prof. Dr. Raza ur Rehman, Prof. Dr. Moin Ansari, Prof and Dean of Medicine LUMHS, Dr. Ajmal Mughal, Chief Psychiatrist, esteemed Health Department, other Government Departments, NGOs, academics institutions, medical professionals, celebrities, Print and electronic media personalities, whose valuable insights and expertise enriched our discussions. Your contributions have been instrumental in advancing our understanding and advocacy for mental health.

I would also like to thank the dedicated organizing team of SMHA for their hard work and commitment to making this event possible. Your efforts have been pivotal in fostering meaningful dialogues and collaborations that enhance the portrayal and understanding of mental health in media.

The SMHA remains committed to promoting mental well-being and will continue to spearhead initiatives that educate and inform the public. Together, we are building a more informed and mentally healthy society.

Warm regards,

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE



The Sindh Mental Health Authority (SMHA) hosted a pivotal round table discussion titled "Mental Health and the Responsibilities of Media" on May 25, 2024, in Karachi. This event brought together distinguished academics, medical professionals, and media personalities to deliberate on the media's role in shaping public perceptions of mental health. Senator Taj Haider of the Pakistan People's Party, the event's Chief Guest, highlighted the importance of media in educating the public about mental health issues and promoting preventive measures. The event featured presentations from renowned experts, including Dr. Sobia Aftab, Dr. Uzma Ali, Dr. Farah Iqbal and Dr. Qudsia Tariq of Karachi University, who compared international and Pakistani media approaches to mental health, and Professor Dr. Iqbal Afridi, who debunked common myths perpetuated by media.

The round table discussion also explored literature's impact on mental health awareness, with insights from Dr. Zainab Bhutto of Bahria University and Dr. Khalida Rauf of SZABIST. Dr. Neel Kanth analyzed the media's portrayal of reincarnation, while Dr. Chooni Lal examined psychiatry through award-winning movies. Notable media and civil society figures, such as Sheema Kirmani, Jahan Ara, Ali Rizvi, and Faisal Edhi, participated in the event, contributing to a vibrant exchange of ideas. Key recommendations included training censorship board members in mental health awareness and ensuring balanced media representation of mental health issues. The SMHA remains committed to continuing these crucial dialogues, fostering collaborations that enhance the portrayal and understanding of mental health in media, thereby paving the way for a more informed and mentally healthy society.



Taj Haider

SENATOR, PAKISTAN
PEOPLE'S PARTY

It was an honor to serve as the Chief Guest at the round table discussion on "Mental Health and the Responsibilities of Media," organized by the Sindh Mental Health Authority (SMHA). I commend the SMHA for orchestrating such an impactful event, bringing together key stakeholders to address the vital role of media in shaping public perceptions of mental health.

In my address, I emphasized the importance of identifying the root causes of mental health issues and advocating for a preventive approach. Media plays a crucial role in this endeavor, providing a platform to educate the masses. Through media, we can teach parents the right kind of parenting that helps raise mentally healthy individuals. Additionally, I stressed that the arts should not merely entertain but also provoke thoughtful reflection, contributing to a deeper understanding of mental health.

I am deeply grateful to the esteemed academics, medical professionals, and media personalities who shared their invaluable insights during the event. Your contributions are essential in advancing mental health awareness and advocacy. Together, let us continue to leverage the power of media to build a more informed and mentally healthy society.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

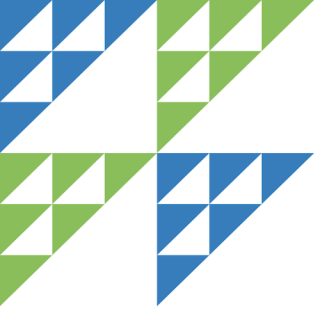
Dr. Syed Zafar Mehdi, Secretary, Sindh Mental Health Authority

Syed Mahnoor Shah, Mental Health & Public Health Researcher

Dr. Tooba Farooqi, Psychologist & Associate Professor FUUAST

Majid Khan Solangi, Sindh Mental Health Authority





KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Dr. Sobia Aftab, Dr. Uzma Ali, Dr. Farah Iqbal and Dr. Qudsia Tariq

Karachi University's Psychology Department

Topic: Comparison of International and Pakistani Media on Mental Health

Dr. Zainab Bhutto, Dean and Director, Institute of Professional Psychology, Bahria University & Dr. Khalida Rauf Professor, SZABIST University

Topic: The Role of Literature in Raising Mental Health Awareness

Professor Dr. Iqbal Afridi, Recipient of Sitar-e-Imtiaz and Emeritous Professor

Topic: Debunking Common Myths and Facts about Mental Health in Media

Dr. Ajmal Mughal, Psychiatrist

Topic: Collaboration Avenues between Mental Health Professionals and Media Personnel

Dr. Neel Kanth, Renowned Pediatrician

Topic: The Portrayal of Reincarnation in Media and its Impact on Human Behavior

Dr. Chooni Lal, Head of the Psychiatry Department, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical College

Psychiatry Through the Lens of Award-Winning Movies



Comparison of International and Pakistani Media on Mental Health

Dr. Sobia Aftab, Dr. Uzma Ali, Dr. Farah Iqbal and Dr. Qudsia Tariq, Karachi University's Psychology Department

In this insightful presentation, Dr. Sobia Aftab, Dr. Uzma Ali, and Dr. Qudsia Tariq explored the differences between international and Pakistani media in their portrayal of mental health issues. They analyzed how various cultures approach mental health narratives and the impact these portrayals have on public perception and stigma. The presentation highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of both international and local media, emphasizing the need for more accurate and sensitive representations of mental health in Pakistan to foster a more informed and supportive society.



The Role of Literature in Raising Mental Health Awareness

Dr. Zainab Bhutto, Dean and Director, Institute of Professional Psychology, Bahria University

Dr. Khalida Rauf, Professor, SZABIST University

Dr. Zainab Bhutto and Dr. Khalida Rauf discussed the significant role of literature in raising mental health awareness. Dr. Bhutto highlighted how literary works explore human emotions and psychological struggles, serving as powerful tools for education and empathy. She emphasized incorporating mental health themes into literature to destigmatize mental illness. Dr. Rauf added by discussing the practical applications of literature in educational settings, showing how stories can bridge gaps in mental health knowledge. Together, they demonstrated how both classical and contemporary texts can foster a more compassionate and informed society.



Debunking Common Myths and Facts about Mental Health in Media

Professor Dr. Iqbal Afridi, Recipient of Sitar-e-Imtiaz

Professor Dr. Iqbal Afridi's presentation focused on debunking common myths and facts about mental health as portrayed in the media. He highlighted how misinformation and stereotypes perpetuated by media can contribute to stigma and misunderstanding of mental health issues. By presenting evidence-based facts and correcting widespread misconceptions, Dr. Afridi emphasized the need for accurate and responsible media representation. His insights aimed to encourage media professionals to play a pivotal role in educating the public and fostering a more accurate and empathetic understanding of mental health.



Collaboration Avenues between Mental Health Professionals and Media Personnel

Dr. Ajmal Mughal, Psychiatrist

Dr. Ajmal Mughal's presentation highlighted the potential for collaboration between mental health professionals and media personnel. He discussed how these partnerships can improve the portrayal of mental health in media, ensuring accuracy and sensitivity. Dr. Mughal emphasized the importance of media training for mental health experts and creating platforms for dialogue between the two fields. By fostering these collaborations, he argued, we can enhance public understanding and reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues.



The Portrayal of Reincarnation in Media and its Impact on Human Behavior

Dr. Neel Kanth, Renowned Pediatrician

Dr. Neel Kanth explored the portrayal of reincarnation in media and its impact on human behavior. He examined how media representations of reincarnation influence beliefs and behaviors, particularly in cultural contexts where these concepts are prevalent. Dr. Kanth discussed the psychological effects of these portrayals and how they shape people's perceptions of life and death. His presentation underscored the need for media to handle such sensitive topics with care to avoid reinforcing misconceptions and myths.



Psychiatry Through the Lens of Award-Winning Movies

Dr. Chooni Lal, Head of the Psychiatry Department, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical College

Dr. Chooni Lal's presentation focused on the depiction of psychiatry in award-winning movies such as *Silence of the Lambs* and *Joker*. He analyzed how these films portray psychiatric conditions, treatments, and professionals, highlighting both accurate and misleading representations. Dr. Lal emphasized the influence of cinema on public perceptions of mental health and the importance of responsible storytelling. By showcasing examples from acclaimed films, he demonstrated how movies can either contribute to understanding or perpetuate stigma, urging filmmakers to prioritize authenticity in their narratives.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The round table discussion on "Mental Health and the Responsibilities of Media" concluded with several critical recommendations aimed at improving the portrayal and understanding of mental health in media.

These recommendations are as follows:

Revolutionizing the Role of the Censorship Board

- Train censorship board members in mental health awareness.
- Involve mental health experts in guiding institutions like PEMRA on handling sensitive topics.
- Develop guidelines for responsible media portrayals of mental health issues.

Balanced Representation

- Ensure media coverage amplifies both the social and psychological impacts of mental health issues.
- Address the medical aspects of mental health with accuracy and sensitivity.
- Promote stories of recovery and resilience to provide a more holistic view of mental health.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Collaboration and Training

- Foster partnerships between mental health professionals and media personnel to improve accuracy in reporting.
- Organize regular training sessions for journalists on mental health topics.
- Create platforms for dialogue and collaboration between media and mental health experts.

Educational Campaigns

- Utilize media to run educational campaigns that destigmatize mental health issues.
- Leverage social media platforms to reach a broader audience with mental health awareness messages.
- Engage celebrities and influencers to advocate for mental health awareness.

Promoting Thoughtful Reflection

- Encourage the arts to not only entertain but also provoke thoughtful reflection on mental health topics.
- Support the production of films, literature, and other art forms that accurately depict mental health struggles and triumphs.

The Sindh Mental Health Authority is committed to continuing these dialogues and fostering collaborations that enhance the portrayal and understanding of mental health in media. Together, we can work towards a more informed and mentally healthy society.



CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS













Thank You!

The Sindh Mental Health Authority extends heartfelt thanks to all participants, speakers, and organizers for making this round table discussion a success. Your contributions and engagement are invaluable in our mission to promote mental health awareness.

Stay Connected

Stay tuned for upcoming events and initiatives by the Sindh Mental Health Authority. Together, we can continue to make strides in mental health education and advocacy.

Contact Us

**Sindh Mental Health Authority
Address: C-51 /II, Block-2, Clifton Karachi
Phone: 021-35308771-72-73-74
Email: info.smha@sindh.gov.pk
Website: <https://smha.sindh.gov.pk/>**

