

# UW GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

## Photo of the Month



*Dr. Helen Jack (L) and Dr. Rukudzo Mwamuka (R) after speaking on mental health workforce strengthening in Zimbabwe during the GMH Winter Quarter Speaker Series*

## Welcome to the GMH Newsletter

Welcome to the UW Global Mental Health newsletter. The [UW GMH Program](#) is a joint program in the Departments of [Global Health](#) and [Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences](#). Each month we will feature a topic related to global mental health and spotlight a faculty member, student, staff member, or project. We will also invite our readers to respond to our question of the month and attend local and global GMH events and opportunities. Our writers include Wilson Hammett (2nd year, MPH candidate), Ingrid Sub Cuc (1st year, MPH candidate), Randi Perry (Junior, Public Health-Global Health), and Tessa Concepcion (Research Coordinator, UW GMH).



## **Featured Topic** **"Ground-Up" Change** **in Mental Health**

Worldwide, 80% of individuals with common mental illnesses reside in low and middle-income countries (LMICs), but LMICs, on average, allocate less than 0.5% of their national budgets on mental healthcare, while high income countries typically spend over 5%. In most LMIC settings there is a profound lack of mental health policy development and implementation to address the significant need for mental healthcare. Barriers to improving access to quality mental health services in the African region include the lowest per capita

mental healthcare spending and lowest average number of working mental health professionals among all WHO regions...

[ [Read the full article here](#) ]

*Image source: Alex Riley. "A Friendship Bench in Zimbabwe is Starting a Revolution in Mental Health" Blue Zones.*

<https://www.bluezones.com/2018/12/a-friendship-bench-in-zimbabwe-is-starting-a-revolution-in-mental-health/>



## **Spotlight** **Rukudzo Mwamuka,** **MBCHB**

Rukudzo Mwamuka, MBCHB is a 3rd year M.Med student at University of Zimbabwe, where she also obtained her undergraduate Bachelor's in Medicine/Surgery degree and postgraduate diploma in mental health. Rukudzo's passion in mental health research and community psychiatry has led her to work with the Friendship Bench Trust, an organisation that works with lay health workers to provide psychological intervention in an effort to close the huge treatment gap in Zimbabwe.

Q: Can you tell me a little about yourself?

A: I am in my final year of the psychiatry residency program at the University of Zimbabwe. I was drawn to the field of psychiatry during my undergraduate rotation when I got to realize how mental health treatment was holistic taking into cognizance one's social, cultural and spiritual circumstances. I also got to work with Professor Dixon Chibanda, the founder of the Friendship Bench, whose work really inspired me. Personally, I am a very sociable person and I would like to think of myself as very motivated and self-driven. I am married and have two wonderful daughters. I also love traveling and experiencing other cultures.

Q: How did you first get interested in Global Mental Health?

A: In Zimbabwe, there are very few psychiatrists, and the career pathway in psychiatry did not seem well defined to me. My love of various cultural experiences led me to develop the interest in Global Mental Health. I was curious to know to what extent cultural differences had an impact on mental disorders.

[[Read the full Q&A here](#)]

## **COVID-19 and Mental Health**

The current COVID-19 pandemic is changing life as we know it. Now, more than ever, it is important to stay [physically distant but socially connected](#). Below are some resources on COVID-19 and mental health:

- [Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations During COVID-19 Outbreak](#) (WHO)
- [Social stigma associated with COVID-19](#) (WHO)
- [What to Do If You're Feeling Anxious About the Coronavirus](#) (UW Medicine)
- [Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19](#) (CDC)
- [Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs during the COVID-19 Outbreak](#) (MH Innovation Network)
- [Youth-focused COVID-19 mental health and well-being resource page](#) (citiesRISE)

# Question of the Month

What are some unique or innovative activities or approaches to mental health happening in your community?

## Events and Opportunities

### Recent events

- **February 24, 2020:** New York City, US – [Love is EleMental](#) (hosted by Columbia University Global Mental Health Program)
- **March 9, 2020:** New York City, US - **\*postponed\*** [Global Mental Health University Seminar](#) (hosted by Columbia University Global Mental Health Program)
- **March 18-21, 2020:** Buenos Aires, Argentina - [Encuentro de la Zona 5 de la WPA “Desafíos para la Psiquiatría y la Salud Mental en el nuevo Milenio”](#) (World Psychiatric Association- WPA Zone 5 Meeting)
- **March 24 -26, 2020:** Geneva - **\*postponed\*** [GENEVA HEALTH FORUM](#): the forum of innovative practices in global health

### Upcoming Global Events

**\*\*Please note that due to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic there may be changes, postponements, or cancellations of events**

- **April 7, 2020:** Worldwide – [World Health Day](#). This year's theme is Universal Health Coverage
- **April 17 – 19, 2020:** Washington D.C., USA – [World Bank Spring Meetings](#) (Due to the evolving situation with COVID-19 the 2020 Spring Meetings will transition to a virtual format)
- **April 16-18, 2020:** Providence, US — **\*postponed\*** [Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Psychiatry and Culture](#)
- **20 - 21 April 2020:** Tokyo, Japan — **\*postponed\*** [Global Experts Meeting on Psychiatry and Mental Health](#) (check for updates on location and registration)
- The [WHO Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020](#) is the global plan that sets out the indicators that all WHO Member states have agreed to deliver in order to improve mental health for all. This plan will be updated over the course of this year and **Ministers of Health will approve the new plan for 2021-2030 in May 2021** at the World Health Assembly. In the coming weeks and months the WHO will be leading discussions with governments at regional and country level on the new plan and with stakeholders more broadly. The WHO is also holding two periods of online consultation on the updates to the plan. **The first opened March 9 and ran until March 22nd 2020.** [See here for more information.](#) A second online consultation will be held later this year.

Do you have something you'd like us to share in our newsletter?

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