

## WFMH Africa initiative buoyed by grants from Ford Foundation and Lilly Boehringer Ingelheim

The World Federation for Mental Health's (WFMH) Mental Health Africa Initiative addressing the mental health consequences of HIV/AIDS in Africa has been strengthened by the receipt of two recent grants from the Ford Foundation and from Lilly USA, LLC and Boehringer Ingelheim.

The Ford Foundation grant will provide base funding to launch the implementation phase of an African secretariat for the initiative to address the mental health needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS, their families and caregivers. Preliminary planning is underway to house the secretariat at the Cape Mental Health Society headquarters in Cape Town, South Africa.

The education grant from Lilly USA, LLC, and Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. will support the preparation, production and distribution of a WFMH Awareness Packet on HIV/AIDS and depression in Africa. This packet will serve to 'close the gap' between 'what is known' and 'what is done' to address the lack of awareness and accessible information regarding the complex but important relationship between depression and HIV/AIDS.

A January 2009 report from the World Health Organization noted that HIV/AIDS imposes a significant psychological burden. 'People with HIV often suffer from depression and anxiety as they adjust to the impact of the diagnosis of being infected and face the difficulties of living with a chronic life-threatening illness, for instance shortened life expectancy, complicated therapeutic regimens, stigmatisation, and loss of social support, family or friends. HIV infection can be associated with high risk of suicide or attempted suicide. The psychological predictors of suicidal ideation in HIV-infected individuals include concurrent substance use disorders, past history of depression and presence of hopelessness.'

These are among the many crucial issues the WFMH hopes to address through the implementation phase of its WFMH Africa initiative, the organisation said in a statement.

Source: [www.wfmh.org](http://www.wfmh.org)

## Call to prioritise mental disorders in children in developing countries

A call has been made to prioritise autism spectrum disorders and other mental disorders in children in developing countries,

and the World Health Organization (WHO) has reaffirmed its commitment to providing technical assistance to deliver integrated health services to people with such disorders.

Speaking on World Autism Awareness Day, Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Assistant Director-General for Non-communicable Diseases and Mental Health, said it was a deep concern that the global burden of disease attributed to mental disorders continues to grow, particularly in developing countries. 'It is essential to prioritise, implement and fund projects on autism spectrum disorders and other mental disorders in children in developing countries,' he said.

Currently, the vast majority of children with mental health needs in developing countries do not receive any treatment or care. The immediate challenge in these countries is generating sufficient resources for primary health care to ensure early identification and treatment of mental disorders among children.

World Autism Awareness Day takes place annually on 2 April.

Autism spectrum disorders are characterised by varying degrees of impairment in communication skills and social interactions and in restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour. The condition causes disabilities that can be lifelong. Emerging evidence indicates that early intervention results in improved outcomes.

Source: [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

## 15th World Congress of Psychiatry

The 15th World Congress of Psychiatry will take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 18 to 22 September 2011.

Under the theme 'Our heritage and our future', the event aims to provide a comprehensive overview of those achievements that have stood the test of time (our heritage) and of the most promising current trends (our future) in the various areas of psychiatric research and practice (e.g. classification, mental health promotion, genetics, neuroimaging, pharmacotherapy, psychotherapies, advocacy, etc.).

The event, under the auspices of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), will be organised by the Argentine Association of Psychiatrists (AAP), the Association of Argentine Psychiatrists (APSA) and the Foundation for Interdisciplinary Investigation of Communication (Finteco).

Source: [www.wpa-argentina2011.com.ar](http://www.wpa-argentina2011.com.ar)