

WEEKLY

Newsletter



Editor's Note,

Welcome to the final edition of our weekly newsletter for the year, and thank you for being part of our journey!

Across our Mental Health Wellness Week, Campus Wellness Hub activities, and the OCD Explained session, one message stood out clearly: mental health conditions are real, affect real people, and deserve understanding, care, and support, not judgment or stigma.

We are deeply encouraged by the level of engagement across our platforms. Participants asked thoughtful questions, demonstrated a willingness to learn how to support others, and practiced self-compassion in meaningful ways. These responses affirm the importance of sustaining mental health conversations, particularly within families, campuses, workplaces, and faith-based and cultural communities.

As we look ahead to 2026, ICTMH remains firmly committed to promoting culturally sensitive, evidence-based mental health education and support. In this spirit, we invite professionals, students, and members of the public to our upcoming virtual conference, an engaging, evidence-based mental health event featuring expert discussions, practical insights, and meaningful learning.

As the year draws to a close, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our guest speakers on the Friday Training on Mental Health Matters, our contributors, and every participant who continues to make ICTMH a growing and compassionate community of care.

We sincerely appreciate the dedicated behind-the-scenes efforts of our Research Officer, Mr. Michael Shaub, whose commitment and excellence have been invaluable. We also specially acknowledge the immeasurably impactful input and constructive feedback of Dr. Ken Springer, which greatly enriched the quality of our newsletter. Our profound appreciation goes to our President, Dr. Stephanie Okolo, whose guidance and insightful suggestions continue to strengthen ICTMH's vision and direction.

Over the years, ICTMH has remained committed to training, advocacy, and amplifying critical conversations around mental health. As we step into 2026, our voice will not only be louder, but clearer, reaffirming that mental illness is not madness, and that no one should have to walk their mental health journey alone.

See you in 2026, and enjoy your holidays!

Ese Ogheneovo
for ICTMH

Weekly Webinar Training

Friday Training Session Review

Date: December 12th, 2025

Venue: Virtual

Topic: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Explained: It is More than Just Cleanliness

Guest Speaker: Dr. Funke Temidayo Olofin

Host: Initiative for Cognitive Therapy and Mental Health (ICTMH)

Breaking the Myths Around OCD

The session opened by addressing one of the most common misconceptions about OCD, that it is simply about cleanliness, neatness, or perfectionism. Participants learned that this narrow view fails to capture the true complexity of the condition. OCD is a neurological and neuropsychiatric disorder marked by intrusive, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviours or mental rituals (compulsions). These compulsions are not habits or choices, they are anxiety-driven responses that can significantly interfere with daily life.

Importantly, the discussion highlighted that cleanliness-related behaviours represent only one subtype of OCD. Many individuals experience symptoms such as fear of harm, taboo or distressing thoughts, excessive checking, or internal mental rituals, often hidden and misunderstood by others.

Understanding OCD: Causes and Diagnosis

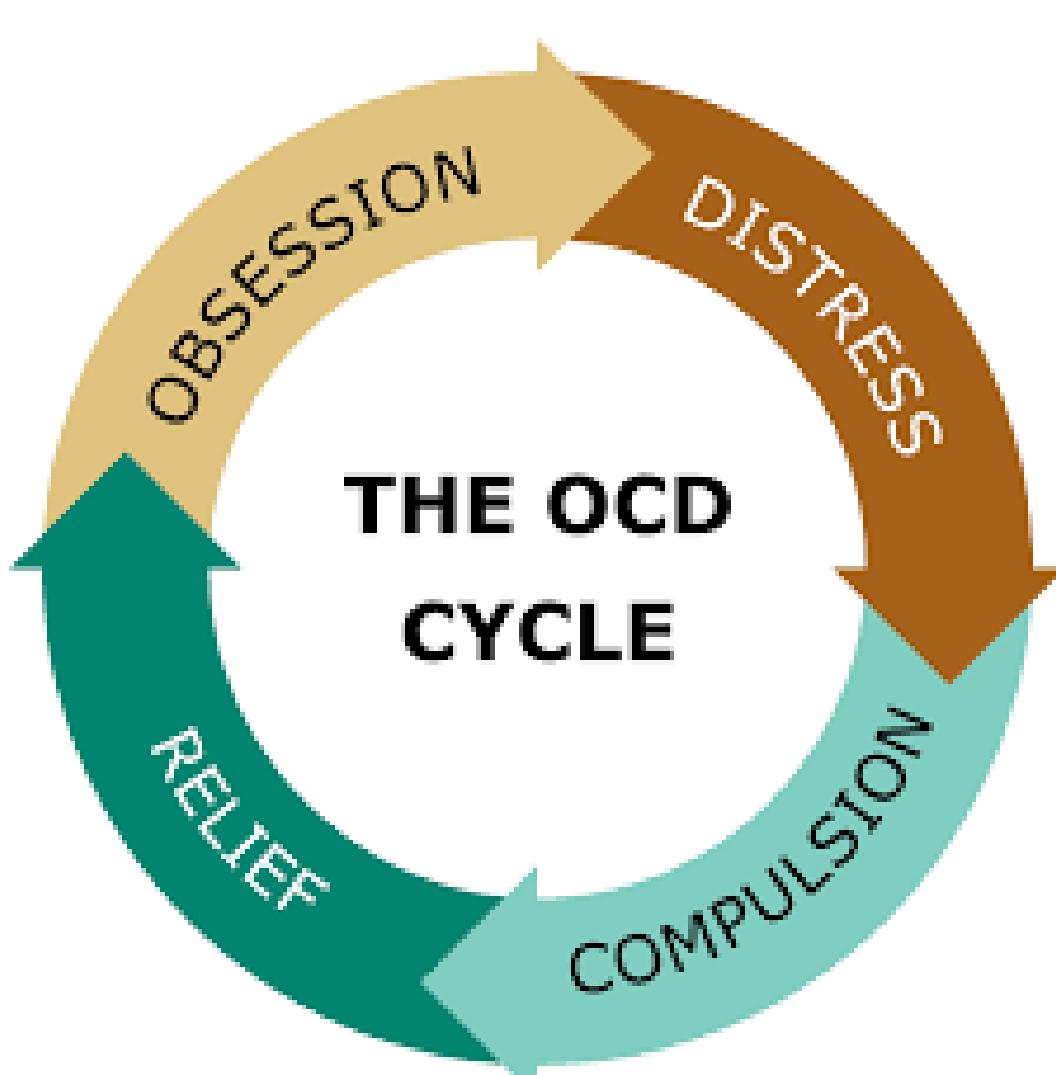
Using the DSM-5-TR framework, the session explained how OCD is clinically assessed. Diagnosis focuses on symptom patterns, the level of distress experienced, and how much the condition interferes with daily functioning, not merely outward behaviour.

Participants learned that OCD often develops through a combination of interacting factors, including biological and genetic vulnerability, neurobiological differences, psychological traits such as high anxiety, and environmental influences like trauma, chronic stress, and sociocultural pressures. Symptoms may vary widely from person to person and can change over time, particularly during periods of increased stress

Treatment, Management, and Hope

A key message from the session was that OCD is manageable and not a life sentence. Evidence-based treatments such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) were discussed as effective approaches. ERP helps individuals gradually resist compulsive behaviours while learning to tolerate anxiety safely. Medication may be recommended when clinically appropriate, based on professional assessment.

Beyond therapy and medication, strong emphasis was placed on psychoeducation, especially for families, to help them understand OCD as a medical condition rather than a behavioural or moral failing.



Insights from the Breakout Sessions

During breakout discussions, participants shared practical strategies for supporting individuals living with OCD. Key insights included the importance of empathy and kindness, avoiding reinforcement of compulsive rituals, encouraging emotional regulation and self-compassion, using structured routines and planning tools, and correcting behaviours gently without shame or criticism.

These discussions reinforced the powerful role of social support in recovery and long-term management.

OCD is not a life sentence. With the right platform, support, and treatment, it can be managed.”

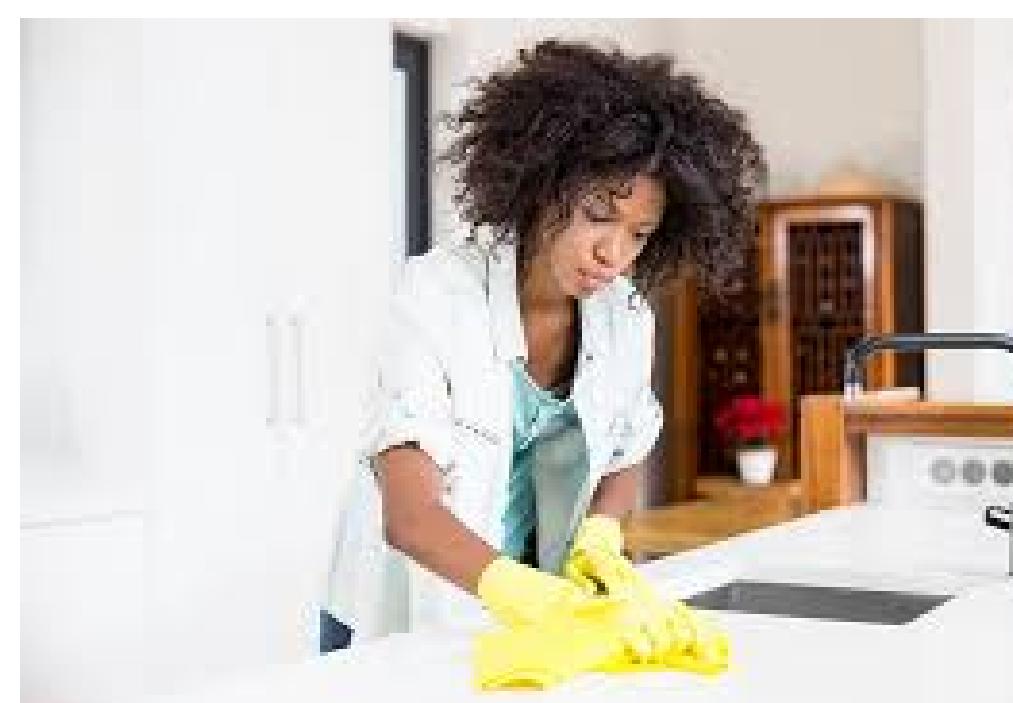
“Family support significantly improves recovery outcomes when families understand that OCD is a clinical condition, not attention-seeking behaviour.”

“We need to be deliberate as families, as social support systems, and as individuals living with OCD.”

“Mental health issues can happen to anybody, and with proper treatment, people can live fulfilling and productive lives.”

Final Reflections

The session concluded with a reminder that untreated OCD can disrupt relationships, academic performance, workplace productivity, and overall well-being. However, with culturally sensitive interventions, informed support systems, and access to evidence-based care, individuals living with OCD can lead healthy, productive, and fulfilling lives.



Key Quotes from the Session by Dr. Funke Temidayo Olofin

“Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder is not just about cleanliness. That is only one small subtype of a much broader condition.”

“OCD is a neurological and neuropsychiatric condition, not a personality flaw or a behavioral choice.”

“What we see on the surface is only the tip of the iceberg; there is a lot happening internally that people do not see.”

“Having intrusive thoughts does not make someone an OCD patient; it is the inability to disengage from them that creates distress.”

Weekly WhatsApp Interactive Session

ICTMH Mental Health Week Report

Theme: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Date: 8th –14th December, 2025
compiled by: Dr. Elizabeth Idowu

Overview

The Initiative for Cognitive Therapies and Mental Health (ICTMH) successfully hosted its Mental Health Wellness Week from 8th–14th December 2025, with a focused exploration of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

The week was designed to move beyond common stereotypes of OCD particularly the misconception that it is only about cleanliness and to highlight the deeper emotional, cognitive, and behavioral struggles experienced Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) by individuals living with the condition. Through reflective messaging, interactive polls, gratitude practices, and community engagement, participants were encouraged to develop empathy, increase awareness, and adopt a more compassionate understanding of OCD and mental health broadly.

Daily Highlights

Motivational Monday

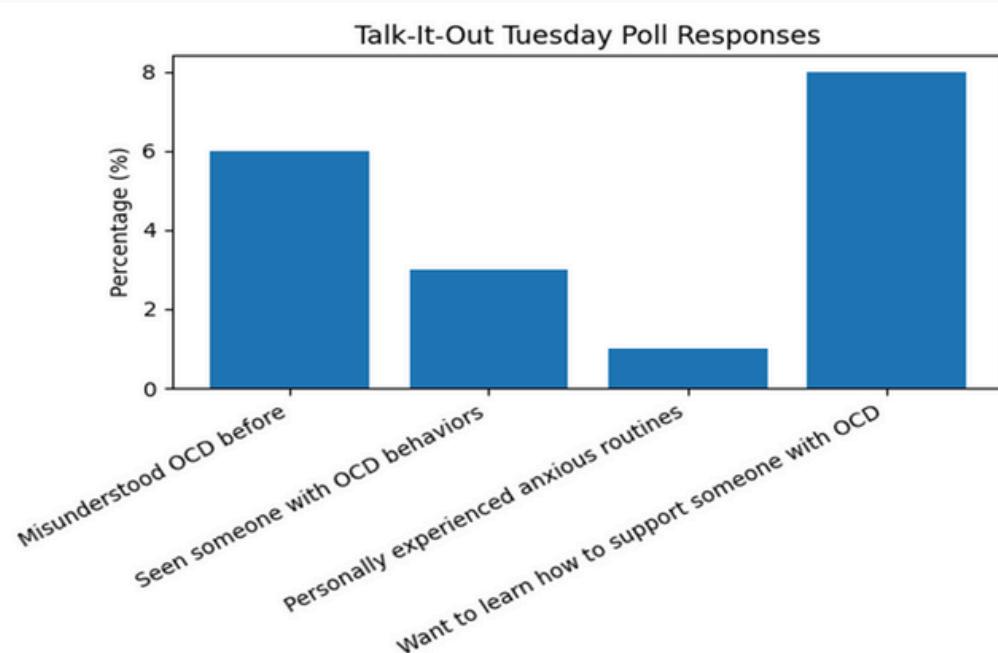
The week opened with a grounding message centered on self-compassion during the festive season. Participants were reminded that while celebrations often bring joy, they can also surface pressure, loneliness, intrusive thoughts, and emotional overload.

Key messages emphasized:

- Moving at one's own pace
- Letting go of guilt around rest and boundaries
- Protecting mental health as a valuable gift
- Choosing peace over pressure

Talk-It-Out Tuesday

Tuesday focused on real-life experiences and perceptions of OCD, encouraging open dialogue without judgment. Participants were invited to reflect on their understanding of OCD and share personal or observed experiences through an interactive poll.



The bar chart visually illustrates that the highest response came from participants seeking to learn how to support people with OCD, highlighting a strong desire for education, empathy, and practical understanding within the community.

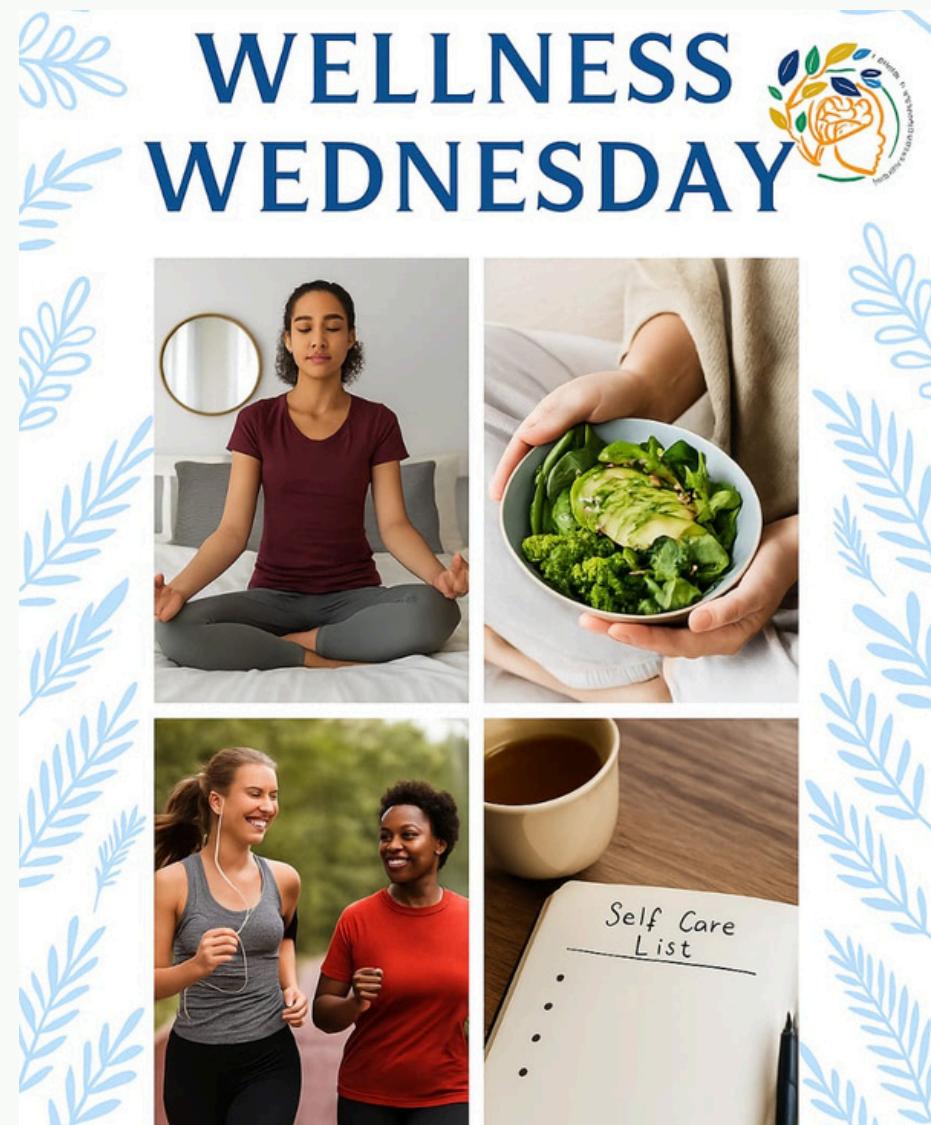


Wellness Wednesday

Midweek discussions centered on how the mind can become trapped in loops of intrusive thoughts and overthinking, often hidden behind smiles and daily functioning. Participants were encouraged to practice gentleness toward their thoughts and bodies, recognizing that not every thought requires confrontation.

The focus was on:

- Normalizing mental fatigue
- Allowing space for humanity and imperfection
- Practicing mindful breathing and self-acceptance



Thankful Thursday

Gratitude took center stage as participants were guided to reflect on small but meaningful victories, including:

- Days when the mind felt lighter
- Moments of intentional breathing
- Times when fear and overthinking did not take control
- Supportive relationships that foster understanding

This session reinforced gratitude as a stabilizing emotional practice, even amid internal struggles.

Fun Friday

Fun Friday introduced light-hearted riddles and humor to help participants decompress after an emotionally reflective week. The session emphasized the importance of laughter, play, and shared joy as protective factors for mental well-being.

Engagement was high, with participants actively contributing answers and enjoying communal connection.

Self-Care Saturday

Saturday focused on redefining self-care as intentional rest and boundary-setting, rather than indulgence. Participants were reminded that slowing down, saying no when necessary, and engaging in simple acts like hydration, stretching, prayer, or walking are valid and powerful forms of care. Participants were invited to share one small self-care action they planned to practice, fostering accountability and inspiration.

Reflection Sunday

The week closed with a calm, introspective reflection session. Participants revisited the understanding that mental struggles often remain hidden, regardless of gender, roles, or outward strength.

Reflection prompts included:

- Where do I need to show myself more compassion?
- Who can I extend gentleness or understanding toward?
- How can I enter the new week with peace and intention?

The session promoted mindfulness, emotional balance, and the importance of supportive community living.

Campus Wellness Hub!

As we look ahead to 2026, ICTMH remains firmly committed to promoting culturally sensitive, evidence-based mental health education and support across communities. In this spirit, we invite professionals, students, and members of the public to our upcoming virtual conference, an engaging, evidence-based mental health event featuring expert discussions, practical insights, meaningful learning, and opportunities to connect, reflect, and strengthen collective action for mental well-being.

Register now: <https://bit.ly/3KSeEtH>



ICTMH ONLINE CONFERENCE 2026

2 DAYS, 4 FACILITATORS, 4 SESSIONS



REGISTRATION LINK
<https://bit.ly/3KSeEtH>



10th - 11th,
JANUARY 2026

10:00AM - 12:00PM DAILY

Session 1 - Breaking Point: When Stress Becomes Crisis

Session 2 - From Pressure to Purpose: Navigating Stress & Peer Influence

Session 3 - The Digital Double-Edged Sword: Social Media & Identity

Session 4 - Thriving, Not Thriving: The Power of Connection

RESOURCE & ANNOUNCEMENTS

FREE ONLINE TRAINING

The Role of Social Support in Recovery

19th Dec. 2025
8:00pm (GMT +1)

Register Here <https://bit.ly/3YeNC2V>

Contact us
+234-706-287-4416
www.cognitiveng.org
[f](https://www.facebook.com/cognitivetherapiesng) [i](https://www.instagram.com/cognitivetherapiesng) [X](https://www.x.com/cognitivetherapiesng) [y](https://www.youtube.com/cognitivetherapiesng) [in](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cognitivetherapiesng) @cognitivetherapiesng

FACILITATOR
Dr. Markus S. David
Clinical Psychologist

Call for Journal Articles - ICTMH

ICTMH invites submissions of journal articles focused on mental health and cognitive behavioral therapies, especially those offering African-based solutions. A list of suggested topics is available, but you're welcome to propose your own. Writing guidelines, including word counts and tips, are also provided. Interested? Contact Ese (07068487474) or Michael(08143296589) on WhatsApp. We're happy to support you through the process. Thank you!



To get feedback or stories? Email us at enquiry@cognitiveng.org

For volunteering opportunities, join our team via social media

@www.cognitivetherapiesng

www.cognitiveng.org