



WEEKLY

Newsletter



Editorial Note

This week was a special one, as World Mental Health Day was celebrated on October 10th. The official theme for World Mental Health Day 2025 was **“Access to Services: Mental Health in Catastrophes and Emergencies.”** In this episode, we’ll be sharing a sneak peek into the Zoom session organized by WHO to mark the occasion. In a similar way, we picked the theme of “The Role of Primary Health Care Givers in Identifying Depression,” this week, underscoring the vital connection between compassion, awareness, and early intervention in the fight against depression.

Across the week-long virtual gathering, participants from diverse backgrounds, including health workers, teachers, students, and faith leaders, shared real stories, reflections, and actions that reaffirmed the essence of empathy in healing. The **Talk-It-Out Tuesday survey**, for instance, revealed critical gaps in training and resources within Nigeria’s Primary Health Care (PHC) system, echoing the urgency for structured support and policy reform.

Dr. Oluyemi T. Atibioke’s presentation further highlighted the important role PHC providers play in early detection and community-based care for depression. His call for empowering frontline caregivers, developing culturally relevant tools, and strengthening collaboration across sectors is both timely and actionable.

The week’s activities, from “Planting New Seeds of Hope” to “Rest Without Guilt”, blended learning with reflection, inviting all participants to see mental wellness not as a destination but as a shared daily practice. **The Campus Hub** report also reflected this spirit, highlighting the growing openness among young people to discuss mental health without shame or fear.

As ICTMH continues to bridge awareness and action, this report reminds us that mental health care begins with empathy and empathy begins with awareness.

Ese Ogheneovo
for ICTMH

Weekly Webinar Training

Date: October 10, 2025

Venue: Virtual

A Summary Of Dr. Oluyemi T. Atibioke's (Clinical Psychologist) Session on "The Role of Primary Health Care Provider in Identifying Depression"

Understanding Primary Health Care (PHC)

Primary Health Care (PHC) is the first point of contact for individuals and families. Its aim is to make healthcare affordable, fair, and accessible especially in rural areas. PHC provides:

- Health promotion , encouraging healthy living
- Disease prevention – vaccination, education, screening
- Treatment and rehabilitation – managing common illnesses
- Palliative care – supporting long-term patients cvf

Nigeria has about 30,000–40,000 PHC centers, but only 10–20% function well due to:

- Poor infrastructure and low staffing
- Inadequate drug supply
- Security issues in rural areas
- Low worker motivation

A strong PHC system forms the foundation for both physical and mental health care.

PHC's Role in Mental Health

Mental health is often overlooked, yet PHC centers can make a big difference by:

- Recognizing depression early
- Offering first-line support and basic counseling
- Referring severe cases to specialists
- Following up with patients
- Reducing stigma through integration into general health care

Key Roles:

- **Early Detection:** Spot sadness, anxiety, or loss of interest early.
- **Education:** Raise mental health awareness and challenge myths.
- **Basic Support:** Provide listening, comfort, and simple therapy.
- **Referral:** Send severe cases to psychologists or psychiatrists.
- **Follow-Up:** Monitor patients to prevent relapse.
- **Training:** Equip PHC workers with basic mental health skills.

Challenges Facing PHC Mental Health Services

Systemic Issues:

- Few functional centers
- Shortage of trained professionals
- Psychology graduates not allowed to practice at PHC level

Societal Issues:

- Low awareness about depression
- Cultural stigma linking mental illness to spiritual causes
- Reliance on traditional or faith healing

Operational Issues:

- Complex screening tools
- High treatment costs
- Co-existing conditions like anxiety or substance abuse

Possible Solutions

The WHO's Mental Health Gap Action Program (mhGAP) offers a plan to close the treatment gap.

Dr. Atibioke's Key Recommendations:

- Empower psychology graduates to screen and counsel for depression.
- Develop local screening tools in Nigerian languages.
- Train PHC workers to manage mild and moderate depression.
- Build referral systems between PHC and hospitals.
- Use outreach and education to improve community awareness.
- Strengthen partnerships between government, NGOs, and communities.

Weekly Webinar Training



Understanding Depression

Depression is a common mental health disorder that affects how people think, feel, and act.

Typical Symptoms:

- **Emotional:** Sadness, guilt, hopelessness, irritability
- **Cognitive:** Poor focus, indecision, anxiety
- **Physical:** Sleep or appetite changes, fatigue, body pain
- **Behavioral:** Withdrawal, neglect, suicidal thoughts

If five or more symptoms last two weeks or more, depression should be suspected.

Discussion Points for PHC Workers

1. Which screening tools (like PHQ-9) are most useful at PHC level?
 2. How can PHC staff distinguish depression from grief or medical issues?
- What strategies help patients open up about

Conclusion

To reduce depression in Nigeria:

- Strengthen and fund PHC systems
- Train health workers in basic mental health care
- Integrate mental health into everyday PHC services
- Educate and empower communities to seek help early



Dr. Atibioke concludes that without strong PHC structures, depression will remain underdiagnosed and poorly treated. A united effort from government, health professionals, and communities is the key to change.

World Mental Health Day 2025

Report on World Mental Health Day 2025

Theme: Mental Health in Humanitarian Emergencies

Date: 10 October 2025

Source: World Health Organization (WHO)

Introduction

World Mental Health Day, observed annually on October 10, serves as a global platform to promote awareness, understanding, and action toward better mental health for all. The 2025 campaign focuses on the theme “Mental Health in Humanitarian Emergencies,” emphasizing the urgent need to support individuals and communities affected by crises such as natural disasters, conflicts, and public health emergencies.

Rationale for the Theme

Humanitarian emergencies cause immense psychological distress, disrupting lives, relationships, and communities. According to WHO, one in five individuals in such settings experiences a mental health condition. The campaign underscores that mental health care is lifesaving, promoting recovery, resilience, and long-term stability.

Key Messages

1. Mental Health in Crises

Conflicts, disasters, and epidemics can lead to anxiety, fear, and depression. These are normal reactions to extreme stress and require timely psychosocial support.

2. Mental Health is Essential for Recovery

Beyond basic needs like food and shelter, survivors require emotional and psychological support to rebuild their lives and communities

3. Integrating Mental Health into Emergency Response

Mental health services should form a core part of humanitarian aid. Doing so not only saves lives but also strengthens community resilience and health systems.

4. Investment in Mental Health is Investment in Recovery

Prioritizing mental health accelerates recovery, supports families and economies, and contributes to sustainable development.

5. Inclusive Mental Health Care

Support must reach everyone — including children, older adults, refugees, persons with disabilities, and those with pre-existing mental health conditions. Barriers such as stigma, discrimination, and financial cost must be addressed.

6. Protection for Humanitarian Workers

Humanitarian responders face high stress and trauma exposure. Organizations are encouraged to provide rest, peer support, and workplace mental health programmes to maintain their well-being and effectiveness.

7. Self-Care and Community Resilience

Individuals are encouraged to prioritize mental health through connection, physical activity, reduced substance use, and seeking help when necessary.

Global Context and Data

By the end of 2024, over 123 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide. Approximately 71% reside in low- and middle-income countries with limited mental health resources. These conditions highlight the growing need for scalable, community-based mental health and psychosocial support interventions that can function even in fragile health systems.



WHO Resources and Tools

To support the 2025 campaign, WHO promotes several practical tools and guides for mental health response in emergencies, including:

Doing What Matters in Times of Stress (2020)

Problem Management Plus (PM+): Psychological Help for Adults (2018)

mhGAP Humanitarian Intervention Guide (2015)

Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers (2011)

These resources offer evidence-based strategies for managing distress, building coping skills, and delivering mental health services in crisis situations.



Conclusion

The World Mental Health Day 2025 campaign reaffirms that “there is no health without mental health.” Addressing mental health in humanitarian emergencies is both a moral and practical necessity. It saves lives, fosters resilience, and empowers individuals and communities to recover and thrive despite adversity. WHO calls on all stakeholders to invest in mental health systems, strengthen community-based interventions, and prioritize psychosocial support as an essential component of every humanitarian response.



Dr. Stephanie Okolo (founder , ICTMH) and some participants at the World International Conference on Mental Health held in the USA, in October, 2025

Weekly WhatsApp Interactive Session

ICTMH Mental Health Week Report
Theme: : The Role of Primary Health Care Givers in Identifying Depression
Date: October 6th – 12th, 2025
compiled by: Dr. Elizabeth Idowu

Overview
The Initiative for Cognitive Therapies and Mental Health (ICTMH) successfully hosted its Mental Health Wellness Week under the theme “The Role of Primary Health Care Givers in Identifying Depression” from October 6th to October 12th, 2025. Conducted virtually via WhatsApp, the week-long event created a safe, interactive platform for faith leaders, teachers, health workers, and mental health advocates to reflect on their shared role in recognizing and addressing depression within their communities.

Through storytelling, reflection, surveys, and wellness challenges, the sessions highlighted gratitude, empathy, and emotional awareness as essential elements of effective mental health care. The week reinforced ICTMH’s mission to normalize mental health conversations and equip community caregivers with the skills to identify early signs of depression with empathy and sensitivity.

Daily Highlights & Community Engagement

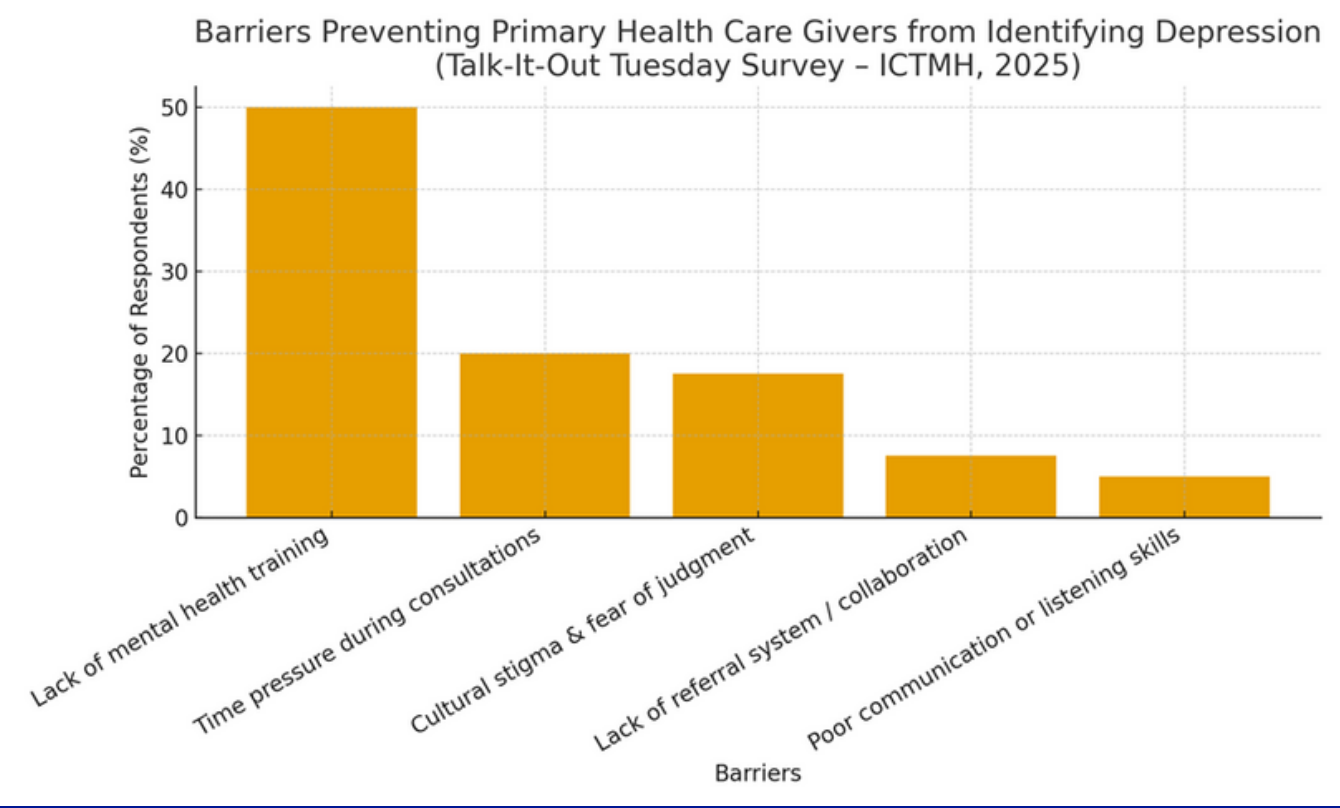
Motivational Monday – “Planting New Seeds of Hope”

The week began with a story about a young teacher who mistook depression for stress until a compassionate nurse took the time to ask, “How are you, really?” The story underscored the healing power of attentiveness and empathy.

Community Reflection:

- Hafsat: “Compassion isn’t just a feeling; it’s an action.”
- Blessing: “I’ll check on my contacts today — a small act can change a life.”
- Mary: “Feeling refreshed and ready to be a light for someone.”
- Henshaw: “Even a simple offline message can bring comfort.”
- Uzo: “Taking things slowly this week. May it be fruitful for us all.”
- Amina: “A simple ‘How are you?’ goes a long way.”
- Khalid: “Every day is a chance to plant seeds of hope.”

Talk-it-out Tuesday



Interpretation:
- **The major barrier (50%) identified was lack of mental health training.**
- **20% cited time pressure, indicating overburdened primary health centers.**
- **17.5% pointed to cultural stigma, underscoring the need for community sensitization.**
- **7.5% highlighted weak referral systems, stressing collaboration with mental health professionals.**
- **5% mentioned poor communication, reaffirming the value of empathic listening.**

Wellness Wednesday – “Refill Your Cup”

The day’s message revolved around Chika, a hardworking woman who rediscovered her peace by pausing to care for herself.

Community Reflections: Latifat, Bassey, Blessing, Mary, and Hafsat all emphasized rest, calmness, and balance.

Thankful Thursday – “Gratitude Transforms”

Participants shared stories of hope and thanksgiving, learning how gratitude transforms the heart even before circumstances change.

Community Reflections: Uzo, Patty, Amina, Mary, and Henshaw expressed gratitude for life, relationships, and growth.

Fun Friday – “Emotions in Action” Contest

Participants creatively acted out emotions — joy, sadness, fear, anger, and surprise — in 1-minute silent videos.

Mary had the highest scores but she was disqualified based on the time logged in. Amina now emerged the winner, receiving ₦10,000 for her expressive performance.



Self-Care Saturday – “Rest Without Guilt”

Using Titi’s story, the day encouraged participants to embrace rest and self-kindness without guilt.

Community Reflections: Hafsat, Mary, Esther, Uzo, and Henshaw shared their rest routines and gratitude for renewal.



Reflection Sunday – “Gratitude and Lessons Learned”

The week concluded with gratitude and reflection on personal growth and balance.

Community Reflections: Hafsat, Amina, Mary, Uzo, and Khalid expressed peace, discipline, and appreciation for growth.

Conclusion

The ICTMH Mental Health Wellness Week deepened awareness about the crucial role of primary health caregivers in early detection of depression.

The Talk-It-Out Tuesday survey revealed that training gaps and workload pressures remain major challenges, highlighting the importance of ICTMH’s continued advocacy and capacity-building initiatives. Each day blended learning, reflection, and participation reminding all that mental health care begins with empathy, and empathy begins with awareness.

Campus Wellness Hub!



Initiative for Cognitive Therapies and Mental Health (ICTMH)
Campus Wellness Hub Weekly Report
Date: 6th October – 12th of October, 2025
Platform: WhatsApp (Virtual)
Compiled by: Khalid Musa

Overview

This week at the Campus Wellness Hub focused on promoting awareness, empathy, and self-reflection. Engagement remained strong, with members actively responding to daily themes and sharing personal thoughts. The group continues to grow and build a more open, supportive community.

Daily Highlights

Monday – Myth or Fact

Theme: “True or False — Mental illness = weakness?”
A myth-busting post was shared to challenge common misconceptions about mental health. Members were encouraged to share myths they believe should be corrected.
Engagement: Several members shared their thoughts, helping to create a positive awareness conversation

Tuesday – Empathy & Connection

Theme: “How do you comfort a friend who says ‘I’m not okay’?”
The post focused on emotional support and empathy in friendships. Members discussed ways they comfort others and offered thoughtful insights.
Engagement: High interaction, members actively responded with personal experiences and comforting approaches.

Wednesday – Wellness Tip

Theme: “Stretch for 5 minutes before reading.”
A short wellness reminder emphasizing the importance of brief stretching before studying was shared. A YouTube link was included for a guided 5-minute stretch routine.

Thursday – Testimony Thursday

Theme: “Overcoming Stigma.”
The post encouraged openness about mental health challenges and focused on resilience. Members reflected on experiences of being misunderstood but choosing to stay strong.
Engagement: Meaningful responses and reflections were shared by several members.

Friday – Friday Focus

Theme: “Should Nigerian universities have more counselors?”
A campus-focused discussion post accompanied by a survey link invited members to share opinions on the availability and importance of student counselors.
Engagement: Moderate participation; members expressed thoughtful views, and several completed the survey.

Saturday – Study vs. Reality

Theme: “The night before exams...”
A lighthearted post comparing study expectations vs. reality encouraged humor and relatability among students.
Engagement: Strong response with playful comments, members identified with “The Procrastinating Type,” “The Nap Champion,” etc.

Sunday – Reflection Sunday

Theme: “Pause and Breathe”
A gratitude-centered post encouraged members to reflect on the week and appreciate small wins.
Engagement: Members shared things they were thankful for, fostering positivity and calmness.

General Observation

The week’s content maintained high engagement, particularly on Tuesday and Saturday. Membership growth continues, with steady interactions from new members. Positive feedback has been consistent, and members are gradually becoming more expressive.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



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!



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