



## Mental Health and the Muslim World

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### Commentary

Mental health can be defined as the wellbeing of one's behavioral, intellectual, and emotional state [1]. While mental illness on the other hand, is defined as an abnormal alteration in one or more of these traits. These range from conditions, such as depression and anxiety, to schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

Since the turn of the millennium, there has been increased public and governmental recognition of mental health across the developed world.

Illness are likely to face discrimination from community members when it comes to issues like socialization, business relationships, and marriage proposals [3]. This discrimination towards mental illness has led to a strong sense of stigmatization within the Muslim communities [3]. The underlying cause of this stigma, in many cases, can be attributed to simple ignorance and lack of understanding the illness

These mass awareness campaigns should be conducted via

social, electronic, and print media depending on the available infrastructure. Within the education system, students attending schools and colleges should be taught about mental health disorders, explaining to them that mental illnesses much like physical ailments have an underlying pathological cause and are manageable. Also within the community, educated members should work hand in hand to raise awareness about mental health.

From a religious point of view, Islamic scholars disapprove of self-harm in any form is strictly prohibited. Furthermore, it is imperative that they inform the Muslim community that mental illness, just like physical illness, requires medical treatment and cannot be overcome by faith and prayers. Although faith and prayer helps in calming and soothing patients, which to some extent causes patients comfort, but will not treat their underlying pathology. In addition to all of this, the Imams (local mosque leaders) within the local community should be educated about mental health issues. As community members suffering from depression or anxiety commonly seek help and

support from them [3]. Hence resulting in Imams being capable of understanding the indications that may point to mental problems expressed by individuals, thus encouraging these individuals to seek the opinion of a medical expert.

Finally, these Imams and the public in general, should encourage the formation of support groups that raise awareness about mental illnesses and allows those suffering from these ailments to meet and

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