


Interpreting in Mental Health Settings: Challenges and Best Practices

Translation Summer School 2022
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Things in reverse



What are you
EXPECTING?





People who struggle with mental health issues

People of limited language proficiency (LLP) in the country where they reside and where they should be receiving care

All the interpreters around the world who have made the decision to work in the mental health sector and put themselves in the service of LLP patients





Disclaimer

1.

Today's presentation

Does not intend to provide
psychiatric-specific
information

2.

Some of the things

You will hear, see, or read
deal with sensitive issues

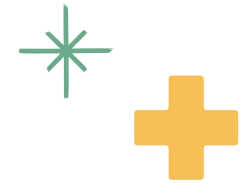
3.

Disturbing content

Might create discomfort to
or offend some members
of the audience

4.

The presentation

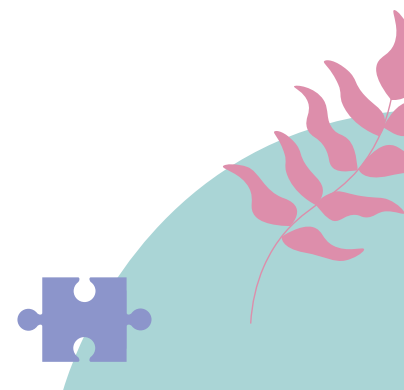


Acknowledges the lack of a
framework of practice in
the mental health sector
for LLP patients residing in
Greece

5.

The intent is

To delineate a framework
of best practices in the
mental health sector



Myth buster

| | Myth | Fact |
|--|------|------|
| Mental health problems don't affect me | | |
| Children don't experience mental problems | | |
| People with mental health problems are violent and unpredictable | | |
| People with mental health needs, even those who are managing their mental illness, cannot tolerate the stress of holding down a job | | |
| Personality weakness or character flaws cause mental health problems. People with mental health problems can snap out of it if they try hard enough | | |
| There is no hope for people with mental health problems. Once a friend or family member develops mental health problems, he or she will never recover | | |
| Therapy and self-help are a waste of time. Why bother when you can just take a pill? | | |
| I cannot do anything for a person with a mental health problem | | |
| Prevention doesn't work. It is impossible to prevent mental illnesses | | |
| People are born with a mental illness | | |
| Only certain types of people develop a mental illness | | |
| Mental illness is caused by a personal weakness | | |
| People with mental illness are dangerous | | |
| Mental illness is a form of intellectual disability or brain damage | | |
| People with mental illness can 'pull themselves out of it' | | |
| People with mental illness should be isolated from the community | | |



1.

What is mental health?

- Are you able/comfortable enough to answer the question?
- What are the elements that may influence your answer?
- Have you ever thought of mental health?



According to the CDC



Mental Health

Includes our emotional, psychological and social well being



Mental Health

Affects how we think, feel, and act



Mental Health

Determines how we handle stress, relate to others, make good decisions and healthy choices





2.

**What is the difference
between mental health
and mental illness?**

According to the *Canadian Mental Health Association*



Words matter



In the course of our lifetime

NOT all of us will
experience a mental
illness



These two terms

Are used
interchangeably to
signify the same thing




However,

We will all struggle with
our mental wellbeing at
some point or another



Are we mentally healthy?



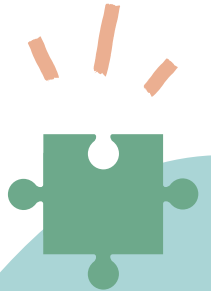
Difficult question

Several factors may affect our mental health

Global factors may affect us to variable degrees

There is a direct link between mental and physical health

Our mental wellbeing



Depends on our ability to:

control/regulate our emotions, thoughts, and feelings in response to stimuli

- solve problems and overcome difficulties

have, maintain and/or seek health social connections

- understand the world around us and participate fully in it



Are we mentally healthy

When we are



**feeling happy all
the time?**



**ignoring our
problems?**



**ignoring other
people's
problems (lack of
empathy)?**





3.

What is mental illness?

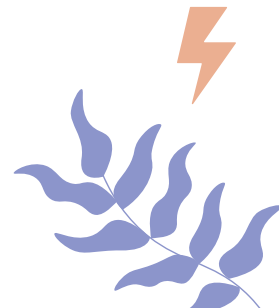
Mental illness is our inability to

think

behave

feel

**interact
with others**



Remember!



It is possible to

have poor mental health but no mental illness

Mental illness is

often episodic (as in the case of other health problems)

It is entirely possible to

have good mental health even with a diagnosis of a mental illness





3.

What is mental disorder?

According to the DSM-5

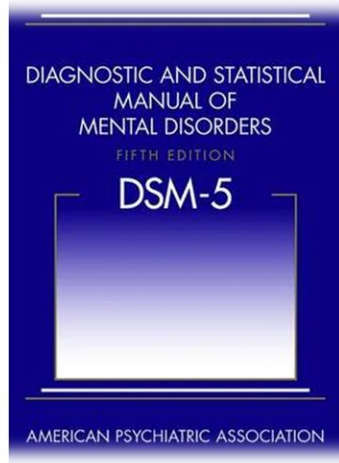
English Definition

A mental disorder is a syndrome characterized by clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotion regulation, or behavior that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological, or development processes underlying mental functioning. Mental disorders are usually associated with significant distress or disability in social, occupational, or other important activities. An expectable or culturally approved response to a common stressor or loss, such as the death of a loved one, is not a mental disorder. Socially deviant behavior (e.g. political, religious, or sexual) and conflicts that are primarily between the individual and society are not mental disorders unless the deviance or conflict results from a dysfunction in the individual, as described above.

Greek Definition

Μια ψυχική διαταραχή και ένα σύνδρομο που χαρακτηρίζεται από κλινικά σημαντική διαταραχή της γνωστικής λειτουργίας του ατόμου, της ρύθμισης των συναισθημάτων, ή της συμπεριφοράς που αντικατοπτρίζει δυσλειτουργία στις ψυχολογικές, βιολογικές ή αναπτυξιακές διαδικασίες που διέπουν την ψυχική λειτουργικότητα. Οι ψυχικές διαταραχές συνήθως συνδέονται με σημαντική ενόχληση ή ανικανότητα στις κοινωνικές, επαγγελματικές ή άλλες σημαντικές δραστηριότητες. Μια αναμενόμενη ή πολιτιστικά εγκεκριμένη αντίδραση σε έναν κοινό στρεσογόνο παράγοντα ή απώλεια, όπως ο θάνατος ενός αγαπημένου προσώπου, δεν είναι ψυχική διαταραχή. Η κοινωνικά αποκλίνουσα συμπεριφορά (π.χ. πολιτική, θρησκευτική ή σεξουαλική) και οι συγκρούσεις κατά κύριο λόγο μεταξύ του ατόμου και της κοινωνίας δεν είναι ψυχικές διαταραχές εκτός και εάν η απόκλιση ή η σύγκρουση προέρχεται από μια δυσλειτουργία του ατόμου όπως περιγράφεται παραπάνω.

Types and categories of mental disorders



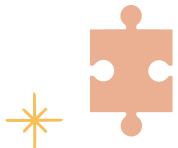
DSM-5

Over 300 disorders

Groups 7

Categories 2

Clusters 3





4.

What causes mental disorders?

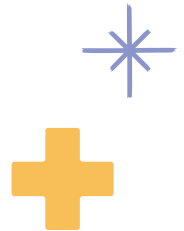
Bare in mind that...

**There is no SINGLE
cause for mental
illness**



**There are many factors
which may contribute
to mental illness**

**Mental illness is a
noncommunicable
disease**



Causes



Genetic predisposition

Genes and family history



Biological factors

Chemical imbalance in the brain



Substance abuse

Alcohol and/or recreational drugs



Life experiences

History of abuse especially during childhood



Traumatic brain injury

As a result of accident or in war zones



Serious medical conditions

Cancer and other life-threatening diseases



Limited social interactions

Lack of friends, loneliness, isolation



5.

What is the link between mental health and other diseases?

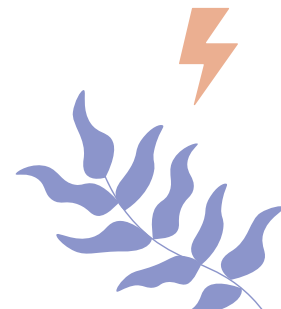
Body and mind interaction

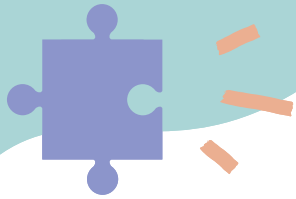


**Noncommunicable
diseases**

multimorbidity

Comorbidity

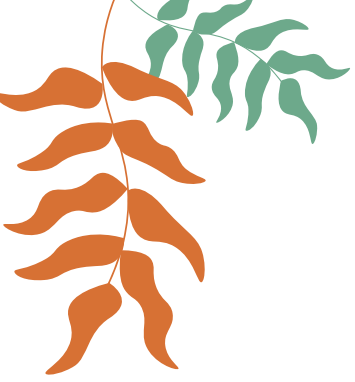




5.

How is all this relevant to interpreting?





We are not born equal



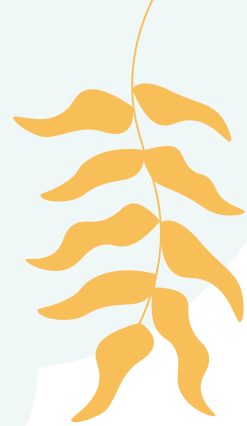
Mental illness concerns us all



Mental illness carries a considerable burden

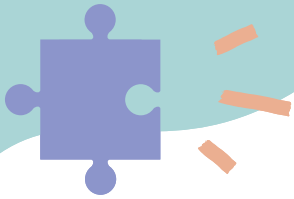


**What should we
do with this
information?**





World Health
Organization



What is PHC?



According to the WHO

“PHC is a whole-of-society approach to health that aims at ensuring the highest possible level of health and well-being and their equitable distribution by focusing on people’s needs and as early as possible along the continuum from health promotion and disease prevention to treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care, and as close as feasible to people’s everyday environment.”



Basic Tenets of PHC

1. Social justice



2. Equality of access



3. Solidarity



Basic Tenets of PHC

4. Shift in paradigm

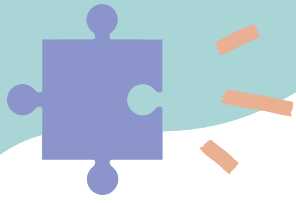


5. Comprehensiveness



6. Holistic approach





7.

What are the most common barriers to accessing healthcare services?

Perceived barriers to access

Perceived barriers to accessing mental health services among the BME communities

1. Personal and environmental factors

Recognition of mental health problems

Social networks

Sex differences

Cultural identity and stigma

Financial factors

2. Relationship between service user and healthcare provider

Waiting times

Language

Communication

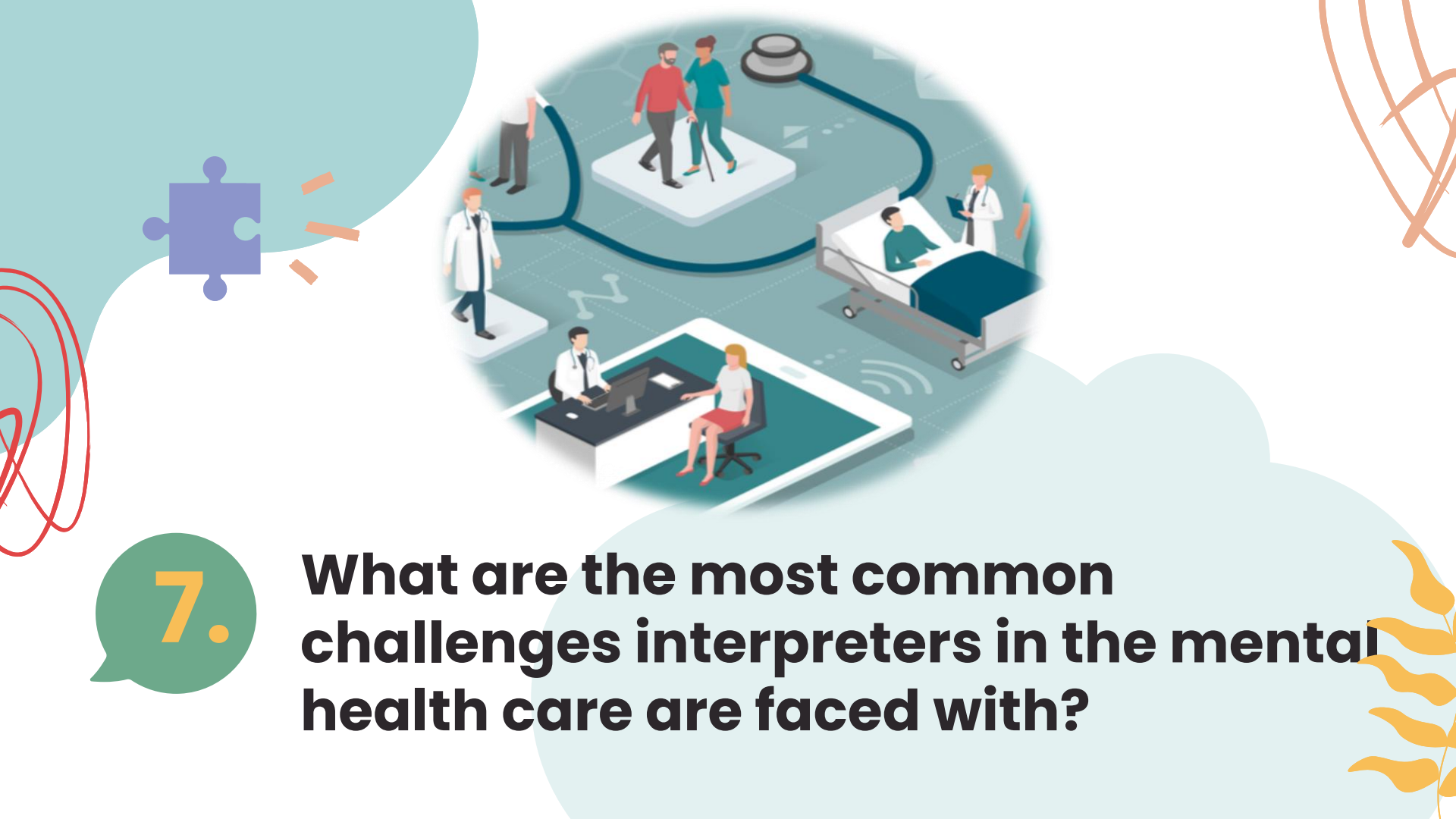
Responding to needs

Power and authority

Cultural naivety, insensitivity and discrimination

Awareness of services

Anjum Memon et al. BMJ Open 2016;6:e012337



7.

What are the most common challenges interpreters in the mental health care are faced with?

Challenges (1)



**1. Knowledge of
subject-matter**



**2. Correlation between
body and mind**



**3. Gender, race
and age**

Challenges (2)



**4. Religion,
social structure
and culture**


**5. Institutional and
scientific culture**

**6. Knowledge of
source and
target language**

Challenges (3)



7. Personal beliefs and biases



8. Mental-health specific training for interpreters



9. Respect of roles and boundaries (power differential)





8.

What are some best practices?



The interpreter



1

Accuracy and fidelity

Interpret everything

2

Affirming and respectful speech

Person-first language
Avoidance of ableism
Gender-neutral/gender inclusive language

3

Reflective and active listening

Become aware and render minimal verbal responses, reflective echoing, paraphrasing or summarizing

4

Tone of voice

Intonation
Volume
Speed

5

Completeness of information

Pauses
Silence
Disfluency
Speech patterns



The interpreter

6

Explicit content

Obscenities
Foul language
Racist slur
Various registers

7

Sensitive information

Testimonies of rape, torture,
physical and emotional pain

8

Communication flow management

Positioning in the room
Speed of speech
Interruptions
Third person interjections
Physical touch





Therapist's initiative



1

Pre-session

Providing information
Establishing basic rules

2

During session

Working in tandem as a
team
Looking out for each
other

3

Debriefing (post-) session

Discuss the session
Raise questions or
concerns
Require disambiguation
Prepare for subsequent
sessions



Interpreters should strive toward

Expanding
language skills



Improving
interpreting skills



Creating
communities of
support



Enhancing
cooperation with
mental health
professionals



Legislating the
medical
interpreting
profession



Let us practice



Thank you!

Do you have any questions?

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