Global Mental Health
Strategies for Staying Current
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This brief article helps us keep current with the global mental health domain (GMH) and supports our desires to meaningfully connect and contribute to our globalizing world. I list several core resources to keep us updated as easily as possible, organized into seven “GMH flows”: media, health agendas, newsletters, internet hubs, research compilations, training, and conferences. Staying in touch with GMH flows—many which converge with other sectors—is essential for mental health professionals who want to relevantly address some of the major issues facing humanity.

GMH OVERVIEW
Global mental health (GMH) is a burgeoning domain of research, advocacy, and practice. It is increasingly being recognized and integrated into the international health, humanitarian, and development sectors including the emerging Sustainable Development Goals Post 2015 Agenda. Grounded in the mental health disciplines, public health, and human rights, GMH also continues its recognizable flow as a social movement prioritizing vulnerable populations: those among the estimated 450 million people having mental, neurological, or substance use conditions who are marginalized by poverty, stigmatized for their conditions, and/or have no access to quality mental health services.

“GMH is an international, interdisciplinary, and multi-sectoral domain which promotes human wellbeing, the right to health, and equity in health for all. It encourages healthy behaviors and lifestyles; is committed to preventing and treating mental, neurological, and substance use conditions (MNS); and seeks to improve policies and programs, professional practices and research, advocacy and awareness, and social and environmental factors that affect health and wellbeing. Psychology, as a vast field of practice and practitioners serving humanity, plays a central role in the GMH domain.” –Kelly O’Donnell, Global Mental Health: Finding Your Niches and Networks, Psychology International (March 2012, p. 10)

STAYING CURRENT WITH GMH
GMH Flow 1: Media Matters
The United Nations Year in Review 2013. At the end of every year, the United Nation’s Multimedia Division overviews some of the major issues on which the UN has focused (conflicts, calamities, human security, climate change, corruption, etc.). To get into the GMH flow right away, watch the latest review for 2013—perhaps more than once. The opening summary sets the tone for the report: “Amid continuing turmoil and crises, it was a year of major strides for diplomacy as the United Nations worked to negotiate peace, instill hope and define a sustainable future for all.”
More updates: BBC News offers online broadcasts/reports on world news that are available on almost any media platform, in over 30 languages, and from varied perspectives. Hidden Pictures: A Personal Journey into GMH is a feature-length film uncovering mental health issues in five countries (website has a two-minute trailer). Other examples of documentary films with a national focus: Like a Death Sentence (Ghana) and Breaking the Chains (Indonesia).

GMH Flow 2: Global Health and Development Agendas

Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020. This landmark Action Plan is the most significant GMH agreement to date by governments. It was approved unanimously by the World Health Organization (WHO) member states at the 2013 World Health Assembly. Its four objectives are to: “strengthen effective leadership and governance for mental health; provide comprehensive, integrated and responsive mental health and social care services in community-based settings; implement strategies for promotion and prevention in mental health; and strengthen information systems, evidence and research for mental health. Pages 9-10 provide an overview of how the Action Plan is structured. I strongly urge colleagues to become very familiar with the overall document and its ongoing implementation, and intentionally relate your work to it. For a short summary emphasizing psychology’s role in the Action Plan, see the January 2014 article In the Monitor on Psychology (pp. 20-21).

More updates: Stay in touch with the Sustainable Development Goals Post 2015 Agenda (SDGs) as the UN/world community forges ahead beyond the Millennium Development Goals. The SDGs will be wide ranging, will continue to be hotly debated, and will include specific calls and criteria for dealing with a multitude of human issues—hopefully prominent among them will be mental health ones. See the Position Statement on the SDGs’s by the Movement for Global Mental Health (MGMH), which calls for protecting human rights, bridging the massive treatment gaps, and integrating mental health into development initiatives. Also stay in touch with the efforts to develop a Framework Convention on Global Health, the Noncommunicable Diseases Action Plan 2013-2020, the growing mental health emphases at the World Economic Forum and the Global Conferences on Health Promotion, and global health governance (e.g., The Lancet article 11 February 2014) and universal health coverage (e.g., World Bank/WHO, December 2013). See also the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), a legally binding international treaty with clear language about the rights of people with disabilities (includes mental health conditions) and responsibilities of governments to protect/help.

GMH Flow 3: News and Views

Movement for Global Mental Health Newsletter. This newsletter may be the most widely read one as it is issued monthly and includes a variety of news items from its 5500 individual and 200 institutional members from 60 countries. The news and views in this newsletter reflect the Movement’s commitment to “improving the availability, access and quality of services for people with mental disorders worldwide...low- and middle-income countries where effective services are often scarce...[and]scientific evidence and human rights.” (website homepage)

More updates: Other excellent newsletters include: Centre for Global Mental Health (London School of Hygiene and Tropic Medicine and King’s Health Partners, monthly); Centre for International Mental Health (University of Melbourne, monthly); mhGAP (World Health Organization, twice a year); Psychology International (Office of International Affairs, American Psychological Association, 4-6 times/year); Gulbenkian GMH Platform (Gulbenkian Foundation, quarterly).
GMH Flow 4: Internet Hubs

**WHO MINDbank.** Launched in late 2013 this online platform is “the only single point globally to access all comprehensive information related to mental health, substance abuse, disability, general health, human rights and development.” “It aims to facilitate dialogue, advocacy and research, to promote reform in these areas in line with international human rights and best practice standards.” (website landing page). It is well-worth the time to explore and to identify which sections are most relevant for your mental health work and vice versa.

More updates: In addition to the websites associated with the newsletters mentioned previously, some of the other many helpful websites: Psychology Resources around the World, in2mentalhealth, GMH-Map, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Network, and National Institute of Mental Health (USA).

GMH Flow 5: Research Compilations

*Lancet Series on GMH (October 2011).* This special issue addresses “interventions to break the vicious cycles of mental health problems and poverty, global child and adolescent mental health, mental health in humanitarian settings, the scale-up of mental health services in low-income and middle-income countries, human resources for mental health care, and human rights violations of people with mental and psychosocial disabilities” (website, with a short audio overview). It is part of a growing body of GMH compilations of research and good practice. Additional GMH journal issues are by: *Harvard Review of Psychiatry* (January 2012), *PLOS Medicine* (2013, 2012, 2009-2010), and *International Health* (March 2013).


GMH Flow 6: Training

GMH courses and clusters of colleagues in different training settings with GMH interests continue to grow (e.g., Schools of Public Health, global health programs/courses, and humanitarian/development organizations). Currently there are at least four masters level degree courses in GMH: King’s College London and University of London (GMH), University of Glasgow (GMH), Univeridade Nova de Lisboa, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Mental Health Department (mental health policy and services), and Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (counseling psychology/GMH). Chicago School of Professional Psychology has a *doctoral program in International Psychology*. Expect there to be a steady increase of GMH courses taught as part of mental health/health degree programs as well as specific GMH-related lectures/emphases in courses. Training in “mental health and psychosocial support” is also increasing within the humanitarian/development sectors, with three examples being the training materials produced by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees’ 2013 reports/manuals for *People of Concern* and for *Staff*, and WHO’s *Building Back Better: Sustainable Mental Health Care after Emergencies* (2013).
More updates: Other GMH training programs include: Trauma and Recovery Certificate Program (Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma); Leadership in Mental Health Course (Sangath Centre in Goa, India and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine); and the various Mental Health and Research Development Programmes (Centre for International Mental Health, University of Melbourne).

GMH Flow 7: Conferences

International Congress of Psychology. This congress is takes place every four years and is organized by the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPSYS). The most recent one was in South Africa with the theme “Psychology Serving Humanity” (July 2012, attended by 5500 people). The next congress (31st) will be in Japan in 2016 with the theme “Diversity In Harmony: Insights from Psychology.”

More updates: For staying current on GMH/psychology-related conferences, see the calendar on the IUPsyS website. Just a few of the many special gatherings, big and small include the GMH Summits, WHO mhGAP Forums, and the APA’s Annual Convention, which includes many GMH-relevant programs, presentations, listed in a special International Program by the Office of International Affairs.

TURNING UPDATES INTO ACTION

GMH is a vast domain of challenges and opportunities for mental health professionals who want to leverage their skills on behalf of our troubled but wonderful world. In addition to skill sets, it also requires a mindset which highly values human dignity and worth, staying updated, and venturing across disciplines, cultures, sectors, and often our own comfort zones in order to promote quality health for all.

“Our duty is to turn hope into action through hard work, commitment, skill, and integrity. With passion but most of all with compassion, we can build the future that your people want and that our world needs.” –UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon; final quote in the video report, UN Year in Review 2013.

NOTES: This article builds upon two previous articles on GMH orientation in Psychology International: “A Resource Map for Connecting and Contributing” (July 2011) and “Finding Your Niches and Networks” (March 2012). It is also part of the GMH-Map project which researches, organizes, and shares important GMH resources. The principle article in the project brings together the work of many colleagues by extensively highlighting materials from the last two decades of GMH developments: “Global Mental Health: A Resource Primer for Exploring the Domain” (International Perspectives in Psychology: Research Practice, Consultation (July 2012).

Kelly O’Donnell, PsyD, is a consulting psychologist based in Geneva. He is an APA International Affiliate, the CEO of Member Care Associates, Inc., and actively works with the health coalition, NGO Forum for Health. Kelly’s publications include over 60 articles in the mental health/member care fields focusing on the well-being and effectiveness of mission/aid workers and their organizations as well as global mental health. His two recent books in the Global Member Care series are The Pearls and Perils of Good Practice (2011) and Crossing Sectors for Serving Humanity (2013). mcaresources@gmail.com