



## ASSOCIATION OF PSYCHIATRISTS IN NIGERIA

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### A TEXT OF SPEECH TO COMMISERATE THE WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY CELEBRATION ON THURSDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2019

THIS YEAR THEME:

#### WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT SUICIDE

##### Greetings /Protocol

Every 10<sup>th</sup> October is the World Mental Health Day, a day set aside by the World Federation for Mental Health, a global Mental Health Organization with members and contacts in more than 150 countries.

The main focus is to promote global mental health education awareness and advocacy against stigma.

The journey began in 1992, exactly one year after World Health Organization integrated Mental Health as the 9<sup>th</sup> component of Primary Health Care. This year the theme for consideration is working together to prevent Suicide.

The theme for this year is apt and relevant bothering on issues that have generated media hype, legal vibes and sociocultural and ethno religious reactions all over the World.

**SUICIDE** is a serious social problem in our society.

It is the **second leading cause of death** globally among young people age 15-29 years. "The future of the continent."

**Every forty seconds**, someone commits suicide somewhere in the world.

Almost **800,000 lives** lost yearly to suicide.

80 percent of suicide occur in the developing countries where there is little or no support system for prevention and treatment of suicidal patients.

For **every one suicide case**, there are at least **30 attempts**.

Suicide occur throughout life.

Could occur in young people as well as elderly population.

Each loss is tragic and devastating to families, friends, community and work place. It leaves long lasting negative effects and stigma on people left behind.

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In the USA, suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> **leading cause** of death and 120 people die in the USA every day, About 69 billion dollars is expended annually on suicide prevention program (more than annual budget of Nigeria).

**SUICIDE** is the act of intentionally causing one's own death.

Death by self-directed violence with intent to die.

There are many actuarial factors that contributes to suicide in our societies which are inexhaustible.

They include but are not limited to the followings

History of mental illness particularly anxiety and depression, history of alcohol and other psychoactive substance use.

Sexual or child abuse, previous suicide attempt, positive family history of suicide, impulsivity feeling of hopelessness, chronic physical illness and personality disorders.

Others are living in isolation, unemployment, losses, economic hardship, and access to lethal methods/materials.

Nigeria in recent times have had her own share in the Suicide epidemic which has been reported in the media.

Almost every day in the newspapers a case of suicide is being reported.

This epidemic climaxed with the upsurge in the drug abuse waves in the country with codeine, tramadol and other psychoactive substance use among the teeming youth in Nigeria.

Suicidal attempt currently in the eye of the law is a criminal offence in Nigeria thus worsening the health seeking behavior of at risk population.

This singular reason in addition to sociocultural beliefs negatively impacted on the available data/statistics needed for planning and formulating suicide strategies because of under reporting.

As a way of finding lasting solutions to the alarming scourge of Suicide in our society, there is urgent need to convocate relevant stakeholders in Mental Health to develop a national policy on Suicide Prevention among the population at risk.

There is need for media practitioners, and other relevant stakeholders to assist with raising awareness, reducing stigma for Mental illness and engaging in responsible media reportage of Suicide in a way that will reduce incidence.

Suicidal attempt should be declared a medical emergency with holistic approach to treatment. There is need to identify the vulnerable groups to Suicide and deliver targeted intervention to the at risk group, regulatory agencies particularly those in charge of poisons, drugs and lethal chemicals should be empowered to restrict/ control access to such materials while safety precautions are optimized at work place.

Legislators should hasten the passage of the long awaited Mental Health Bill gathering dust in the hallowed chamber so as to reduce the burden of mental illness.

Other important measures to consider include the followings,

Develop Standard Operating Procedure for Suicide care, teaching of coping and problem solving skills in our educational institutions and work places, strengthening economic indices, setting up of counseling unit in our citadel of learning and promoting connectedness in our society.

In conclusion, Nigeria must take a giant stride by looking at mental health challenges of her teeming population, create enabling environment for mental wellbeing and develop suicide prevention strategies that is achievable, affordable and implementable within the sociocultural milieu of our society.

I therefore congratulate the World over as we celebrate another Mental Health Day.

Long live APN

Long live NMA

Long live Federal Republic of Nigeria

**DR. Lateef Taiwo Sheikhl**

**President Association of Psychiatrist in Nigeria**