Personal Statement

Prof. Norbert Skokauskas (Norway): Work Intentions as the WPA Secretary for Education and Scientific Publications

The World is rapidly changing and the WPA must adapt and lead.

Income inequality, wars, increasing numbers of refugees, pandemics and climate change are among the most compelling events facing the world today. Everyone and everywhere is affected by these challenges, and the most vulnerable, particularly our patients, suffer disproportionately. The recent crises have also raised awareness about the importance of mental health, but this need for care has simultaneously exacerbated demands on the limited availability of services. Now is the time for the WPA to advance its educational and publication agendas.

- To meet the increased demand for mental health services, WPA must expand its educational activities to support national societies.
- To thrive in times of uncertainty, the WPA has to be innovative, dynamic and inclusive and must put emphasis on sustainable education and scientific publications.
- To make a difference, the WPA shall enhance its global presence in the area of education and publications; lead interagency collaborations; and support psychiatrists and psychiatry by:

1. Attracting the best and the brightest to psychiatry
   While recruiting to psychiatry has been an ongoing challenge, the current reality of increased recognition of the importance of mental health and the need to reduce stigma has resulted in several creative, effective national recruitment strategies. WPA, together with national societies, shall analyse those experiences and find methods to adapt and implement them across the world.

2. Training and sustaining WPA membership
   Innovative educational programs that prevent burnout and other forms of loss to the profession must be a high priority of the WPA. Modern technology has greatly expanded access to education, and we need to take advantage of it.

3. Retaining WPA’s human capital
   Many individuals have significantly contributed to their national society and/or the WPA. Such expertise should not be lost prematurely through retirement or semi-retirement. The WPA needs to identify ways to provide opportunities for these psychiatrists who want to be involved in programs that match their expertise with global training needs around the world.

I am a psychiatrist, professor, qualified medical educator, and founding editor of “World Child and Adolescent Psychiatry,” the official journal of the WPA Child and Adolescent Psychiatry section. I have been privileged to be exposed to various cultures and languages, as have studied, worked and lived in four continents during my career. My career also included a year at the World Health Organization, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, where I served as consultant working on education and training in mental health. I have had the honour and pleasure to
serve as Secretary, and then Chair (for the last six years) of the WPA Child and Adolescent Psychiatry section; and as a member of a number of the WPA committees and working groups.

The WPA has been very generous to me – from my first Fellowship to attend the WPA conference as an early career psychiatrist, to receiving Honorary Membership in the WPA. Now it is my turn to give back to the WPA.