

What is the purpose of launching the *World Journal of Psychiatry*?

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Figure 1 Editor-in-Chief of the *World Journal of Psychiatry*. Anantha Shekhar, MD, PhD, Professor, Director, Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute, Indiana University School of Medicine, 410 West 10th Street, Suite 1100, Indianapolis, IN 46202, United States.

Abstract

The first issue of *World Journal of Psychiatry (WJP)*, whose preparatory work was initiated on May 18, 2011, will be published on December 31, 2011. The *WJP* Editorial Board has now been established and consists of 103 distinguished experts from 32 countries. Our purpose of launching *WJP* is to publish peer-reviewed, high-quality articles *via* an open-access online publishing model, thereby acting as a platform for communication between peers and the wider public, and maximizing the benefits to editorial board members, authors and readers.

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INTRODUCTION

I am Anantha Shekhar, MD, PhD, a full professor from Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute, Indiana University School of Medicine (Figure 1) and the Editor-in-Chief of *World Journal of Psychiatry (World J Psychiatry, WJP)*, online ISSN 2220-3206, DOI: 10.5498). I am very pleased to announce that the first issue of *WJP*, on which preparation was initiated on May 18, 2011, is officially published on December 3, 2011. The *WJP* Editorial Board has now been established and consists of 103 distinguished experts from 32 countries. Congratulations to the publisher, members of editorial board of the journal, all the authors and readers for this memorable event!

Thinking about launching a new journal in any area of medicine, when there are scores of journals in every field of science and medicine, one could legitimately ask - why another journal in this field? What is there that is not already being addressed well by existing journals? What will this new journal add? How will this impact the field? Why now? These were the first questions that I asked myself when I was chosen to lead the *WJP* this year. The fact that I have accepted the role must mean that I was

able to answer these objections effectively and believe that there is indeed a need for a new journal of psychiatry that has a global scope and brings a unique international perspective to the field. I hope you, the reader, will agree with me after you read this brief essay.

Research and publishing in psychiatry has been burgeoning over the last 50 years, especially since the development of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—edition III (DSM-III) in 1980, which provided for the first time specific guidelines to diagnose and code hundreds of mental health conditions. This was a consensus document, led by US psychiatrists, based on some of the then emerging epidemiological findings, but also notable for its “atheoretical” and descriptive approach. Outside the United States, clinicians have used the International Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders-10 (ICD-10) predominantly, but the premise of these two systems is fairly similar. Since the DSMs and ICDs, much has been done to refine the syndromes, their epidemiology, their therapeutics and most recently their genetics. These developments have transformed research in psychiatry into a full-fledged biomedical science with a strong humanistic basis in elucidating pathophysiology. Yet, almost all of the foundational information for this science has come from the data gathered in the developed world, with limited inclusion of the large populations living in the low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) that account for the majority of the world’s people. This has significant implications when one thinks about “mental health” issues for humanity beyond the developed world, and we begin to address the increasingly acute needs of the LMIC populations. Alas, there is no systematic approach to develop such a worldwide “big picture” of psychiatry and mental health issues, or a journal dedicated to this mission. I believe that the *WJP* can serve that function and begin to elucidate the many emerging but unexplored aspects of world psychiatry.

To begin with, there are likely to be many differences in the phenomenology of psychiatric disorders between the world’s populations at the level of clinical presentation, diagnostic thresholds, disease course, and therapeutic responses, even for the major syndromes where these concepts have been explored in extensive detail in the western world. For example, much has been written about the many different somatic forms of presentation of depression in Eastern cultures compared to the more “psychological” presentations in the West^[1,2]. Does this simply mean they are just different clinical manifestations of the same disorder? Do they have the same neurobiological basis but different “mental” constructs? If so, would biological therapies such as “antidepressants” work just as effectively in Chinese cohort of depressed subjects but not “cognitive” therapies? How does this affect the key construct of “depression” in the DSM which requires “sadness” or “hopelessness” as one of the fundamental criteria? Similar questions can be raised for literally anyone of the major DSM diagnostic categories. Thus, a journal dedicated to “World Psychiatry” would be

an important venue to systematically publish studies that address these questions.

While limited systematic work has been done to address the many unanswered phenotypic differences in psychiatric disorders across the world, there have been somewhat greater number of large scale, systematic genetic studies that have been conducted across multiple ethnic groups. These studies consistently show significantly different (sometimes diametrically opposite) effects of genes and or their associations with neuropsychiatric disorders^[3,4]. These genetic ethnic differences are further amplified by epigenetic factors such as nutrition, poverty, psychosocial pressures and lack of health services, dramatically altering the prevalence, course, severity or outcomes of psychiatric disorders.

There is also increasing recognition of the socioeconomic effects of mental illnesses across the globe. Recent data suggest that over 11% of the global “disease burden” is of psychiatric in nature. Yet, less than 2% of the global “health care” spending is directed towards mental illnesses^[5]. This situation is clearly worsened by the co-occurrence of poverty, poor resource management and unavailable health care. Even more distressingly, there is emerging evidence that mental illness actually perpetuates global poverty. The cycle of poverty does not seem to be as robustly improved by simply by providing financial resources. In contrast, providing mental health services actually has a more robust effect on reversing the poverty cycle. This has major implications for global aid agencies and their strategies for resource distribution. Yet, little research has been done to explore these global economic aspects of mental illnesses^[6,7].

SCOPE

WJP aims to report rapidly new theories, methods and techniques for prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and nursing in the field of psychiatry. *WJP* covers topics concerning behavior and behavior mechanisms, psychological phenomena and processes, mental disorders, behavioral disciplines and activities, adjustment disorders, anxiety disorders, delirium, dementia, amnesic disorders, cognitive disorders, dissociative disorders, eating disorders, factitious disorders, impulse control disorders, mental disorders diagnosed in childhood, mood disorders, neurotic disorders, personality disorders, schizophrenia and disorders with psychotic features, sexual and gender disorders, sleep disorders, somatoform disorders, substance-related disorders, and psychiatry-related traditional medicine, and integrated Chinese and Western medicine. The journal also publishes original articles and reviews that report the results of psychiatry-related applied and basic research in fields such as immunology, physiopathology, cell biology, pharmacology, medical genetics, and pharmacology of Chinese herbs.

CONTENTS OF PEER REVIEW

In order to guarantee the quality of articles published in

the journal, *WJP* usually invites three experts to comment on the submitted papers. The contents of peer review include: (1) whether the contents of the manuscript are of great importance and novelty; (2) whether the experiment is complete and described clearly; (3) whether the discussion and conclusion are justified; (4) whether the citations of references are necessary and reasonable; and (5) whether the presentation and use of tables and figures are correct and complete.

COLUMNS

The columns in the issues of *WJP* will include: (1) Editorial: To introduce and comment on the substantial advance and its importance in the fast-developing areas; (2) Frontier: To review the most representative achievements and comment on the current research status in the important fields, and propose directions for the future research; (3) Topic Highlight: This column consists of three formats, including (A) 10 invited review articles on a hot topic, (B) a commentary on common issues of this hot topic, and (C) a commentary on the 10 individual articles; (4) Observation: To update the development of old and new questions, highlight unsolved problems, and provide strategies on how to solve the questions; (5) Guidelines for Clinical Practice: To provide guidelines for clinical diagnosis and treatment; (6) Review: To systematically review the most representative progress and unsolved problems in the major scientific disciplines, comment on the current research status, and make suggestions on the future work; (7) Original Articles: To originally report the innovative and valuable findings in psychiatry; (8) Brief Articles: To briefly report the novel and innovative findings in psychiatry; (9) Case Report: To report a rare or typical case; (10) Letters to the Editor: To discuss and make reply to the contributions published in *WJP*, or to introduce and comment on a controversial issue of general interest; (11) Book Reviews: To introduce and comment on quality monographs of psychiatry; and (12) Guidelines: To introduce consensus and guidelines reached by international and national academic authorities worldwide on the research in psychiatry.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the *WJP* will be one of the first psychiatric journals to be published outside the dominant publishing houses of the developed world. It is also an open access,

online journal dedicated to rapid publication process that is available to anyone freely. This is a clear sign that the many regions of the world where research and academic publishing was relatively modest in the past are now growing, demanding more responsive, locally grown publication efforts. Yet, with the current electronic publication technology, these journals could now compete in a global information market and be accessible by everyone very easily. This creates new dissemination tools to empower the faculty and researchers employed in a wide range of institutions across many countries where research resources are limited, but where powerful, culturally relevant information is being generated that need to be easily disseminated in peer reviewed academic papers^[8]. Thus, I hope the *WJP* will provide a much needed new platform for psychiatric publications that bring out the unique aspects of mental maladies and their therapies across multiple countries, cultures and linguistic boundaries, and give voice to a world-wide chorus of new information that helps us to properly understand the big picture.

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