



Cape Mental Health

all about ability

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

October 2015

For immediate release

### **October Mental Health Awareness Month**

Mental Health Awareness Month is celebrated annually in October, and this year Cape Mental Health (CMH), a leading mental health Non Profit Organisation, will be raising awareness around 'Dignity in Mental Health'.

Dignity is our inherent value and worth as human beings; everyone is born with it. One in four persons in all communities worldwide has a mental health condition, and one in every four people has, at some point in their lives, experienced a loss of dignity because of their mental health condition.

'Few people understand the true meaning of dignity, and even fewer realise the extraordinary impact it has on our lives and relationships. The social exclusion, lack of resources, inequality, discrimination and stigma faced by many persons with a mental illness inhibits the restoration of their dignity,' says Ingrid Daniels, Director of Cape Mental Health.

The glue that holds our relationships together is the mutual recognition of the desire to be seen, heard, listened to and treated fairly; to be recognized, understood and to feel safe in the world. When our identity is accepted and we feel included, we are granted a sense of freedom and independence and a life filled with hope and possibility.

'We should always remember that in order to restore dignity, all persons who are living with a mental illness have a voice and should be heard. I am not defined by my mental illness,' says Michael Hattingh, a member of Fountain House, CMH's psychosocial rehabilitation programme, and of the Cape Consumer Advocacy Body (CCAB) for mental health care users.

Cape Mental Health holds aloft its umbrella of care and advocacy to restore the dignity that lives within our service users and to address external factors that erode their dignity by offering comprehensive, proactive and enabling mental health services in the Western Cape.

Despite the existence of legislation like the National Mental Health Policy Framework Strategic Plan 2013-2020, there are still crucial issues that need to be addressed and rectified to ensure the dignity of mental health care users. These include: easy and reliable access to the correct psychotropic medication; access to community-based psychosocial rehabilitation centres; the allocation of sufficient beds and resources to psychiatric and other health care facilities; ensuring all medical staff have basic training in and understanding of mental health; and ensuring service user participation in treatment plans and policy implementation.

Although South Africa has legislation in place to ensure the protection of the rights of people with psychiatric (also known as psychosocial disability) and intellectual disabilities, it is our ongoing responsibility to ensure that this legislation is implemented so that all South Africans are treated with dignity and respect.

On World Mental Health Day, Cape Mental Health appeals to everyone to play their part in making dignity in mental health a reality for all South Africans:

- **Government** – ensuring, through concerted efforts, the effective implementation and monitoring of the Mental Health Policy Framework and Strategic Action Plan for 2013-2020, which has to date, not been fully realised and continues to lead to shortcomings in services for mental health care users across SA
- **Stakeholders and service providers** – ensuring that high-quality, accessible mental health services are developed across SA and made available to mental health care users
- **South African citizens** – joining hands in the fight against stigma and discrimination and standing up for the rights of mental health care users to lead lives filled with dignity and respect
- **Families of mental health care users** – embracing persons with mental disability, recognising their potential, their rights to lead dignified lives and to function as contributing members of society
- **Mental health care users** – standing up for their right to lead lives filled with dignity and prosperity in a supportive and inclusive society, free from stigma and discrimination and with access to all the required mental health services

Each of us has the responsibility to restore the dignity and humanity of someone with a mental disorder. 'To make dignity in mental health a reality requires every member of society to work together and make mental health visible. Together, we can end the stigma and bring hope, shelter and dignity to those affected by mental disabilities. We might not be able to change the world, but we can create a more respectful way of being in it together,' explains Chanelle Albertyn, PR and Communications Manager of CMH.

Join us and pledge your support to the World Dignity Project. The **World Dignity Project**, in association with the World Federation for Mental Health seeks to cast light on the stigmas overshadowing mental health disorders across the globe through awareness efforts, local and national government advocacy and educational programs. For more information visit [www.worlddignityproject.com](http://www.worlddignityproject.com)

Like our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/capementalhealth> and watch our Dignity in Mental Health video for more information <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YiUOozh0ZJc>. We also invite you to pledge your support by signing our Dignity in Mental Health boards at the 21<sup>st</sup> Cape Town International Kite festival on 31 October and the 1 November, at Zandvlei Nature Reserve in Muizenburg.

ENDS

**Additional Information – Cape Mental Health:** Cape Mental Health provides innovative and effective mental health services to people in disadvantaged communities in the Western Cape. This non-profit organisation has been active for 102 years and continues to work towards a society where people with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities are included at all levels and have access to education, training, work and social opportunities.

For more information contact Cape Mental Health on 021 447 9040, email [info@cmh.org.za](mailto:info@cmh.org.za) or visit [www.capementalhealth.co.za](http://www.capementalhealth.co.za).

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