

Karla Soares-Weiser:



Short bio:

Dr. Karla Soares-Weiser is a leader in global health care with a proven track record in evidence-based health care. As the Editor-in-Chief of Cochrane, she has led transformative changes in the development and publication of evidence syntheses, significantly reducing the time to publication and focusing the organization to prioritize systematic reviews relevant to tackle global challenges. Dr. Soares-Weiser, a board-certified psychiatrist, holds a master's in mental health epidemiology and a doctorate in evidence-based health care. Her career spans over 30 years, marked by significant contributions to health care research and strategic adaptations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, she has held academic positions and founded a consultancy business focused on evidence synthesis for government and non-profit sectors around the world, demonstrating her commitment to global health equity.

Abstract:

"Evolution and Revolution: The Future of Evidence Synthesis in Cochrane"

This presentation highlights Cochrane's pivotal role in shaping the future of health and care through transformative shifts in evidence synthesis. We explore the evolution of systematic reviews, Cochrane's revolutionary changes, and the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a changing landscape. With an ongoing structural transformation, Cochrane aligns its commitment to global health challenges, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring evidence synthesis contributes to improved health outcomes, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Looking forward, Cochrane's visionary approach prioritizes relevant evidence synthesis to inform decisions in health and care on a global scale.

"Better evidence for better mental health: challenges and pathways forward"

This presentation explores the need for robust evidence in mental health to address uncertainties in managing mental health amid increasing prevalence and morbidity. Despite significant progress, challenges remain such as inconsistent diagnostic criteria, lack of core outcomes, underpowered studies, significant loss to follow-up, the chronic nature of mental illnesses, unexpected adverse events from continuous treatment, and stigma. Systematic reviews can help address these issues, reduce research waste, and support well-designed, adequately powered studies to ensure comparability. We advocate for a strategic approach to improve the quality of systematic reviews and evidence synthesis in mental health, providing a robust foundation to inform diagnostic and treatment strategies, and to enhance patient outcomes globally.

Marianna Purgato:



Short bio:

Prof Marianna Purgato is a clinical psychologist and an associate professor in applied medical technology and methodology at the WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Mental Health and Service Evaluation, Department of Neurosciences, Biomedicine and Movement Sciences, University of Verona, Italy.

She has extensive experience in conducting systematic reviews and has served as an associate editor with both the Cochrane Common Mental Disorders Group and the Cochrane Schizophrenia Group. In 2017, she co-founded with Professor Barbui a Cochrane Network at the University of Verona. The network is called Cochrane Global Mental Health, and represents a partnership that brings together international researchers with an interest in conducting systematic reviews and meta-analyses on vulnerable population groups.

Prof Purgato published so far more than 120 full papers in international scientific journals, including numerous Cochrane reviews. The list of scientific contributions can be found at this link <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=Yce9bF0AAAJ&hl=it&oi=ao>

Abstract:

Promotion, prevention, and treatment interventions in global mental health

Promoting mental health, as well as preventing and treating mental disorders, is critically important in public health. Many randomized controlled trials and systematic reviews evaluate intervention strategies for these objectives. However, distinguishing between promotion, prevention, and treatment poses challenges that have significant implications for the design and conduct of systematic research. This talk will focus on key aspects and challenges along the promotion-to-treatment continuum in global mental health research. Additionally, it will describe a global initiative aimed at facilitating the evaluation of evidence and positioning randomized research along this continuum.

Jakša Vukojević:



Short bio:

Ph.D. Jakša Vukojević, Ph.D. is a research associate at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Zagreb and a specialist in psychiatry. Since the end of his specialization in 2022, he has been working at the Department of Diagnostics and Intensive Treatment of the Vrapče Psychiatry Clinic and is currently in the process of acquiring a subspecialization in biological psychiatry. In 2020, he received his doctorate at the Croatian Brain Research Institute of the University of Zagreb in the field of neuroscience, specifically neuropharmacology. For his doctorate, he received the Dr. Vlado Jukić Award for Doctoral Dissertation as well as the Dean's Award for Scientific Achievement. During his education, he received scientific training in the Laboratory of Pharmacology and the Laboratory of Molecular Pathology of the Faculty of Medicine, in the International Agency for Cancer Research in Lyon, as well as in the Department of Neurocognition, Neurocomputing and Neurogenetics of Yale University. He is the author and co-author of more than 25 scientific papers with an H-index of 12. He is a collaborator on several domestic and international scientific researches. His area of scientific interest is digital psychiatry, the use of computer methods and digital data for the purpose of prediction, monitoring and treatment of psychiatric diseases. In addition to the above, he was involved in consulting projects for the development of health applications and market research.

Abstract:

“Chatbots and their use in psychiatry”

This lecture will explore the application of ChatGPT in psychiatry, particularly its integration into everyday practice. By examining the various use cases of ChatGPT and comparing them with scientific literature, we aim to assess its validity in real-world scenarios. Our literature review utilized several scientific databases and additional internet searches to identify relevant scientific papers and applications, focusing on publications available until late February of this year. Notably, many of these studies address broader concepts rather than specializing in psychiatry or mental health. The research was not explicitly focused on ChatGPT, but also other large language models (LLMs) as the research in this field is relatively nascent. A substantial part of the research potential has already been commercialized, prompting us to include various mental health applications leveraging this technology. Given the heterogeneous nature of the studies identified, we categorized them into three areas: general applications of ChatGPT in psychiatry; research exploring the diagnostic capabilities of ChatGPT, with particular attention to anxiety, depression, and suicidal behavior; and commercially available applications focusing on mental health.

Tomislav Franić:



Short bio:

Tomislav Franić, born on May 5, 1972, is a psychiatrist specializing in child, adolescent, and forensic psychiatry, currently employed at KBC Split. He graduated in medicine from the University of Zagreb and completed his postgraduate specialization in child and adolescent psychiatry. Additionally, he received further training in Belgium, the Republic of Ireland, and the United Kingdom. He is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Split School of Medicine. He also teaches at several faculties in Split: the Faculty of Kinesiology, the Academy of Fine Arts, and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as at medical faculties in Zagreb and Mostar.

His clinical work and scientific interests are particularly focused on adolescence, suicidality, psychological pain, sports psychiatry, and the transition from adolescent to adult psychiatric care. He was the principal investigator for Croatia in the EU FP7 project MILESTONE, the largest randomized controlled trial to date on the topic of transition. He is currently the principal investigator in the Horizon Europe project Youth-GEMs, which explores genetic, epigenetic, and environmental influences on the mental health of young people. Additionally, he works as an external EU expert in evaluating Horizon and MSCA project proposals. He has published over 93 scientific papers and 11 book chapters, with his work appearing in prestigious journals such as *The Lancet*, and has an H-index of 23. https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=hr&user=MQ0bb8cAAAAJ&view_op=list_works

He is married, a proud father of a medical student, and the owner of an African Grey parrot.

Abstract:

Access to healthcare is a significant obstacle in the prevention and treatment of mental diseases. This issue is influenced by geographical barriers, such as the shortage of mental health professionals in rural areas and limited transportation options. Financial barriers, where the high cost of services and inadequate insurance coverage, prevent many from affording necessary treatments. Societal and self-stigma discourage individuals from seeking help. Workforce shortages, with a global lack of mental health professionals and high levels of burnout, further exacerbate the problem. Cultural and language barriers lead to miscommunication and ineffective treatment. Policy and systemic issues, including insufficient funding and fragmented services, add to the challenges. There is also a lack of awareness and education about mental health issues and available treatments among the general public and healthcare providers. All of these factors contribute to the difficulty in accessing comprehensive mental health care. Addressing these challenges requires policy reforms, improved education and training, expanded telehealth services, community programs, and stigma reduction initiatives. These measures can enhance access and improve outcomes in mental health care. By tackling these issues, we can create a more equitable and effective mental health system. This will ensure timely and adequate support for all individuals, particularly those in underserved and marginalized communities. This fosters a society where mental health care is accessible to everyone and mental well-being is prioritized.

Sandra Nakić Radoš:



Short bio:

Sandra Nakić Radoš is a clinical psychologist and associate professor at the Department of Psychology at the Catholic University of Croatia, who has been working in the field of peripartum mental health for more than 15 years. She graduated from the University of Zadar and received her PhD on postpartum depression at the University of Zagreb. She was a visiting scholar at the University of Sussex (UK) working in the field of post-traumatic stress disorder after childbirth. She gained knowledge and experience in reproductive mental health through many years of work at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Clinical Hospital Centre Sisters of Mercy (Zagreb). She has about 60 published scientific papers and is the leader of several scientific projects. She was a vice chair of the COST Action Riseup-PPD - an international interdisciplinary network of researchers and experts, within which she co-led the group in developing clinical guidelines for peripartum depression. She is a principal investigator for Croatia in the Horizon project HappyMums on depression during pregnancy. She co-founded the Center for Reproductive Mental Health in 2014 and is the president of this association dedicated to the well-being of pregnant women, mothers and their families.

Abstract:

Peripartum depression is the most common peripartum mental health issue, affecting one in six women. To be able to prevent and timely identify women at risk of developing peripartum depression and offer them adequate and effective treatment, there is a need for clinical practice guidelines that would be based on empirical evidence. A recent systematic review of peripartum depression guidelines found methodological inconsistencies across current guidelines in Europe. Therefore, the COST Action Riseup-PPD Research Innovation and Sustainable Pan-European Network in Peripartum Depression Disorder, aimed to review the literature and systematize the evidence on the effectiveness of interventions for the prevention, screening and treatment of peripartum depression. The methodological steps in developing clinical guidelines and the current knowledge of the intervention effectiveness from systematic reviews will be outlined. Evidence-based Clinical Guidelines for the Prevention, Screening and Treatment of Depression in Pregnancy and Postpartum will be presented. These findings will also be presented in the context of the needs and available services and care for the mental health of pregnant and postpartum women in Croatia.

Marija Franka Žuljević:



Short bio:

Marija Franka Žuljević, MD, PhD, completed her medical studies in Split in 2020. She is currently employed as an assistant at the Department of Medical Humanities at the University of Split School of Medicine. She completed a postgraduate doctoral program TRIBE – Translational Research in Biomedicine, where she defended her doctoral dissertation titled “Attitudes on Psychedelics and Psychedelic-assisted Psychotherapy.” She is a guest lecturer in the doctoral program at the University of Luxembourg, teaching the course “Good Scientific Practice.” She is a certified trainer for conducting VIRT2UE education on responsible science.

Abstract:

3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)-assisted psychotherapy for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in adults: a Cochrane systematic review and meta-analysis

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Theoretical Background and Rationale: There has been a sharp increase of clinical trials showing efficacy of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy (MDMA-AP) for treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Cochrane review methodology can assess such a complex intervention with high scrutiny.

Research Question: To synthesize available evidence on the effectiveness and safety of MDMA-AP compared with placebo in treating adults with PTSD.

Methods and Analysis: We searched 8 databases on 29 November 2023. We included randomized controlled trials (RCTs). We excluded all open-label or post-crossover data. Our outcomes were PTSD severity, suicidality, depression severity, and quality of life. We used the Cochrane RoB 2.0 tool to assess risk of bias and evaluated the evidence using the GRADE approach.

Main Findings: We included 6 studies with 280 participants. Using MDMA compared to inactive placebo over three dosing sessions results in a slight reduction in PTSD symptom severity. However, the evidence is very uncertain about the effect of MDMA or inactive placebo on suicidality during treatment. We were unable to analyse depression severity or quality of life due to insufficient data. Two dosing sessions, using MDMA compared with low-dose MDMA over two dosing sessions may result in a reduction in PTSD symptom severity after treatment. For both intervention designs, the evidence on depression severity and quality of life is inconclusive. **Conclusion:** Although the findings are encouraging, further trials with a higher certainty of evidence are needed. Protocol elements such as type of placebo used, number of dosing sessions, and the criteria for patient inclusion should be uniform.

Marina Vidović:



Short bio:

President and founder of the Association for promoting mental health Phoenix Split which provides free help and support to people with mental disabilities and illnesses in the Split-Dalmatia County.

When it was founded, her vision was to lead the association with a team of people who themselves struggle with such difficulties, in order to try together to fill in the shortcomings of the existing system, and to offer quality support programs in the community. Through various projects, it tries to give a voice and restore personal power to those who, often based on a psychiatric diagnosis/illness, have been deprived primarily of faith in themselves and the possibility of recovery and hope for a quality life in general. She is a member of the Management Board of SUMEZ (Croatian Association of Mental Health Associations). A person with personal experience of dealing with mental illness herself and an educated peer support specialist, the first trainer of Intentional Peer Support in Croatia (Core training certificate in eCPR- community based support in Emotional Crisis (by Daniel Fisher, MD, PhD), QualityRights training: Mental Health Human Rights & Recovery (WHO), OPEN DIALOGUE/OPEN (ING) DIALOGUES).

Nominated in 2021. for the Fierce Woman Award for her activist and humanitarian work in the community in recognition of her valuable contribution to the fight against stereotypes and stigmatization of people struggling with mental disabilities, as well as for the national T-portal award in 2024. Visionary of the year where she was a finalist in the social action category. She is a representative of a civil society organization in the Social Council of the City of Split. Member of the Commission for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Mental Disabilities at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Croatia.

Abstract:

In the desire to contribute to the end of marginalization, stigmatization and social exclusion of persons with mental disabilities, based on our own experience as an association founded by persons with mental disabilities for such persons, we designed a 3-year PROGRAM "LET'S ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES FOR MENTAL HEALTH" which offers a PACKAGE OF FREE SERVICES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT in the community. Its GOAL is to contribute to the quality of life of people with mental illnesses and their social integration through activities that enable them to use their own skills, experiences, creativity, abilities and create a positive trail and sense of usefulness in the community. Through various work and volunteer actions, participants have the opportunity to leave an important positive mark, they have the opportunity to seek and receive support in the recovery process, but also to become part of the support system for others.

Lada Sente:



Short bio:

Lada Sente, alongside her primary and secondary education, she also attended music education. She completed her music education in 2022 by defending her final thesis and achieved the profession of a musician instrumentalist, pianist. She enrolled in the School of Medicine in Split in 2022, where she is a full-time student. During her first year, she joined the Croatian Medical Students' International Committee (CroMSIC), at the Split branch, as an active member. In her second year, she became the local coordinator for the project "Promoting Mental Health - Inside Out" within the same organization. In addition to her role in CroMSIC, she is a member of the Council of the Student Section for Psychiatry - MentaliST and one of the founders of the educational podcast "Doturska ćakula".

Abstract:

The role of medical students in the protection and promotion of mental health among peers and youth in general

Mental health issues have been present throughout the history of humankind. With the establishment of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948 and the first International Congress on Mental Health, enormous acknowledgment of both mental health and its importance has been accomplished among health professionals and activists. Mental health awareness began to rise, and simultaneously with it, the incidence of mental illnesses as well. What is the reason for the increase in mental illnesses? There is a wide variety of reasons, ranging from biological to socioeconomic, including those we can and cannot influence. However, has society's mental health awareness increased correspondingly to the incidence of mental illnesses? Not quite, due to still existing misunderstandings and lack of education about mental health and illnesses.

How can we, as medical students, enhance awareness of mental health in our society? Primarily, through reducing the stigma about mental health. We accomplish that by engaging in projects that give us proper education, considering all the aspects of mental health. Furthermore, we pass on the acquired knowledge to those closest to us, to our peers and youth. One of those projects is "Pogled u sebe" (eng. "Inside Out") under the Croatian Medical Students' International Committee (CroMSIC). Projects aren't the only form of influencing and spreading awareness. For example, we also use the benefits of social media to create wide-reaching educational content. Besides that, we organise events with the underlying message of mental health importance among our peers.

References: José Bertolote The roots of the concept of mental health World Psychiatry. 2008 Jun; 7(2): 113–116. doi: 10.1002/j.2051-5545.2008.tb00172.x

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