

PLENARY 10

Children's Mental Health: Are We Facing in Crisis?

Nazariah Aiza binti Harun

The COVID-19 pandemic that struck globally left a significant and devastating impact on the lives of children and adolescents. The immense effect on social, economic, and mental health of children and adolescents is slowly emerging. Malaysia Country Report 2022: Strengthening Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Systems and Services for Children and Adolescents in the East Asia and Pacific Region; mental health of children and adolescents is amongst the most neglected health issues globally, including East Asia and the Pacific. Fast forward, this vulnerable group is suffering from mental health issues as a result as evidenced by recent research conducted. National Health Mobility Survey (NHMS) 2019, about 424,000 children in Malaysia have mental problems, however many do not come forward or are unable to seek assistance. Utmost concern is that 1 in 8 adolescents aged 10–19, and 1 in 20 children aged 5–9 years are estimated to have a mental disorder including developmental disorder. Furthermore, suicide was the second leading cause of death among adolescents aged 15–19. The Adolescent Health Survey 2022 reinforced the worrying state of mental health among our youths. Despite this burden, there is a substantial unmet need for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for children and adolescents. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) is an institutional priority for the UN and for UNICEF and is critical to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. To address the mental health and psychosocial well-being of children and adolescents there is a need for a holistic and tiered approach to MHPSS that includes actions to: promote well-being; prevent poor mental health by addressing risks and enhancing protective factors; and ensure quality and accessible care for those with mental health conditions. This talk would give an overview of the current mental health status of children and adolescents and how to navigate them.

Keywords: Children's mental health, Adolescents, COVID-19 pandemic, Mental disorders, Mental health support, Suicide prevention, Mental health services.

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Correspondence to:

Datin Dr Nazariah Aiza binti Harun, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Hospital Selayang, Selangor, Malaysia. Email: aizaharun@gmail.com
