

Mental Health Symposium 2021: Empowering Mental Wellbeing Among Malaysians Living Across Borders

Hidayatul Nabila Rosaidi, Siti Sarah Mohd Nor, Muhammad ‘Afif Amran, Yusra Syazana Mohd Rodzi, Syafira Mohd Shaman, Juiliana Hamzah, Nusayba Shaharom, Nurfaridah Muhammad Reza, Emilia Habiba Mohamad Jamil, Mohd Akif Farhan Ahmad Basri

Leeds Institute of Health Sciences, School of Medicine, University of Leeds.

Correspondence: Hidayatul Nabila Rosaidi - nabilarosaidi27@gmail.com

Keywords: *mental health, symposium, IKRAM UKE, Health & Wellbeing cluster*

Presented as a poster at the BIMA National Conference in Warwick University on 31.8.2024

Introduction: The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact of global crises on mental health, amplifying existing inequalities across race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. The 2021 World Mental Health Day campaign, themed 'Mental Health in an Unequal World,' seeks to address these disparities, advocating for universal access to mental health services regardless of background or location.

Project aim: In alignment with this, Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Cluster of IKRAM United Kingdom & Eire (IKRAM UKE) has taken an initiative to organise a symposium, aiming to increase awareness on mental health among Malaysians, in particular those who are living abroad in UK and Ireland. This symposium served as a dynamic platform for renowned experts to illuminate critical mental health issues, promote a culture of discussion, and equipping participants with knowledge and practical skills for mental wellbeing.

Methodology: Held virtually via Zoom and live-streamed on Facebook, the symposium was structured into three targeted sessions catering to diverse audience groups within the Malaysian community. A forum focusing on perinatal mental health was conducted at the beginning of the event, uniting medical experts and experienced mothers to discuss emotional wellbeing during this crucial period. The subsequent session, titled 'Raising Our Young Minds,' delved into effective parental strategies for nurturing children's emotional development. Recognizing that students constitute a substantial segment of the Malaysian community abroad,

we introduced practical methods such as mindfulness and art therapy to foster mental health wellbeing.

The symposium garnered significant global participation. Analysis of collected feedback indicated high satisfaction levels, with nearly half of respondents expressing extreme satisfaction (48.9%) and the rest rated as very satisfied (46.2%). More than half of participants highly recommended the event to their peers.

Conclusion: Mental Health Symposium 2021 (MHS 2021) epitomized a pioneering effort by the Health & Wellbeing Cluster of IKRAM UKE to promote the holistic message of health, with a specific focus on empowering mental wellbeing among Malaysian community living across borders. The overwhelmingly positive feedback underscores the program's success in advancing its mission.

References

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