Foreword

Murad Moosa Khan^{1,2}

¹President of the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP), Washington DC, USA

²Department of Psychiatry, Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan

Suicide is one of the most personal yet one of the most complex acts anyone can perform. It continues to be a major global public health problem with an estimated 800,000 deaths annually. This is despite the fact that there have been significant advancements in the fields of science and technology, of material wealth and living conditions as well as in the early diagnosis and effective treatment of many mental disorders, including mood disorders. Hence, the continuing need to develop effective suicide prevention programs cannot be overemphasized.

This monograph is timely as the global priority of suicide prevention is highlighted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, with a target of reducing premature mortality from noncommunicable diseases by one-third, with suicide mortality identified as an indicator for this target. The monograph is also highly relevant as it not only traces the major milestones and achievements in suicide prevention so far but also identifies key priority areas for the future. It takes a global perspective of suicide and suicide prevention, covering all the regions of the world. The authors are all based in their respective regions. Suicide may be a global problem, but solutions always have to be local.

Clearly, suicide prevention will continue to pose as big a challenge for the foreseeable future as it did 50 years ago. This is particularly

so for those countries where lack of resources, poorly established primary and mental health services, and weak political processes make prevention efforts doubly difficult. However, as recent figures from the United States and Scotland show, even high-income countries, with well-established health systems and national suicide prevention programs, are not immune from increases in suicide rates.

In suicide prevention there is no room for complacency. Suicide prevention poses a unique and formidable challenge. Public and mental health professionals, government and nongovernmental organizations, and civil society across the globe need to work together to take up this challenge.

It is hoped that this work will serve as a useful resource for all of us.

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Murad Moosa

Professor Emeritus
Department of Psychiatry
Aga Khan University
Stadium Road
Karachi 734800
Pakistan
muradmk@gmail.com