



Dear IASR members,

On January 2020, I have started my position as the President of the IASR after co-chairing the 2017 suicide summit in Vegas and two years of serving as President-elect. For those who don't know me, I am a Professor of Child Psychiatry at Tel Aviv University, Israel, Director of Geha Psychiatric Hospital and Director of Adolescent Day Unit, seeing suicidal patients on a daily basis. I have been studying suicidal behavior for the past 25 years focusing on the neurobiology of suicide and suicide in schools and military.

Recently, the IASR general assembly approved enlargement of the board and during the past month you elected two new members for the board: **Prof. Diana E. Clarke**, (Ph.D), as Member-at-Large and **Prof. Vladimir Carli** (MD) as Treasurer. These two great clinicians and researchers will serve as an important addition to our existing Board which includes **Prof. Lars Mehlum** (past President), **Prof. Katalin Szanto** (Secretary) and **Prof. Barbara Stanley** (our Journal Editor).

As an academy dedicated to the promotion of suicide research, we already have two important ongoing activities: a great scientific journal and a suicide summit (together with AFSP) every two years. I feel we need to give our members more in between these summits and as I declared when elected, during my term I would like to develop more educational activities for both junior and senior suicidologists.

In light of this vision we planned for three main educational activities:

1. **IASR Summer Workshop for early career Suicidologists**- the aim is to promote research level among young suicidologists. This workshop will give

basic tools for early career researchers who want to do a high-level suicide research. This workshop was planned for July in NYC in collaboration with AFSP.

2. **IASR Meta Analysis and Systematic Review Workshop for Senior Suicidologists-** The aim is to promote high level research in suicidology. The lecturer is a world leader in metanalysis teaching, Prof. Stefan from the Department of Psychiatry in Munich. This workshop will give basic tools for your first meta-analysis. This workshop was planned to happen at the first day of ESSSB congress in September in Rome.
3. **SPOC- short private online course** on introduction to suicidology- planned to be an online series of excellent lectures for everyone who wants to enter the world of suicide research. Dr. Olivia Kirtley agreed to lead this project.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic caught us in the middle of planning....

Now, ESSSB is postponed, flights are stopped and the world as we knew it has completely changed. Thousands have died already, and many countries are struggling with extreme distress. Medical staff is collapsing under the pressure and anxiety is universal. The lock-down in many countries is, by itself, enough to creates loneliness, distress and depression.

We know that in times of emergency, wars and nature disasters, suicide rates usually go down for a while but later, when economic depression and unemployment appear, suicide rates may go up. However, we don't have much evidence to relay on. Most knowledge comes from the SARS and Ebola epidemics but none of them was so widely spread and had such an impact on life and economy. Partial lock-downs were used during SARS epidemic and there is some

knowledge on its effect on the population. This time calls for more evidence - based high quality research on the topic.

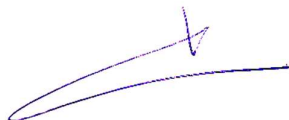
Below you can find **some updated resources and reviews on the impact of pandemics on mental health and suicidality.**

Our new board will have to re-discuss the activities we planned and move **to online interactive methods of distant learning.** We will update you when this is decided and ready to use.

Meanwhile, let's hope this pandemic will end soon and that governments and policy makers will do more so suicide rates will not go up in an "epidemic after the epidemic". **It's the responsibility of each one of us to raise awareness that this challenging time is a risk not just for physical health and the economy but also for mental health and suicidal behavior.**

Keep safe and, despite all, have a Happy Easter and Passover.

Yours,



Prof. Gil Zalsman (MD, MHA)

IASR President

Resources on COVID 19 and suicidality:

1. Reger MA, Stanley IH, Joiner TE. Suicide Mortality and Coronavirus Disease 2019-A Perfect Storm? JAMA Psychiatry. 2020 Apr 10. [Epub ahead of print]
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2764584>
2. Druss BG. Addressing the COVID-19 Pandemic in Populations With Serious Mental Illness. JAMA Psychiatry. 2020 Apr 3. [Epub ahead of print]
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2764227>
3. Brooks, S. K., Webster, R. K., Smith, L. E., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., & Rubin, G. J. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence. Lancet. 2020 Mar 14;395(10227):912-920.
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30460-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30460-8/fulltext)
4. Center for Disease Control and Prevention(CDC). Quarantine and isolation.
<https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/index.html>
5. Batty et al., Psychosocial characteristics as potential predictors of suicide in adults: an overview of the evidence with new results from prospective cohort studies. Translational Psychiatry 2018; 8:22.
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41398-017-0072-8>
6. Wu P, Fang Y, Guan Z, et al. The psychological impact of the SARS epidemic on hospital employees in China: exposure, risk perception, and altruistic acceptance of risk. Can J Psychiatry 2009; 54: 302-11.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3780353/>



7. Chan S, Chiu F, Lam C, Leung P, Conwell Y. Elderly suicide and the 2003 SARS epidemic in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*. 2006;21(2):113-118.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16416469>