Mental Health Dialogues

WEBINAR SERIES # 3

Mental health for all: how to reach vulnerable groups in research

04 FEBRUARY 2025 // 11:00 AM - 12:30 CET

PROGRAMME

Welcome & programme overview by Prof. Benedikt Amann (5')

Opening Speech by Prof. José Luis Ayuso Mateos (5')

Lightning Talks (20')

All projects: *Each project has identified specific vulnerable groups they want to engage with. Which vulnerable groups has your project identified, and why do you consider it essential to engage them when planning and implementing a project?*

Moderated Discussion (30')

- **Engaging with young people in research: challenges and solutions (BootStRaP, IMPROVA, Reconnected & SMILE):** *It can be hard to engage young people in health-related interventions, and they need specific consideration. What challenges has your project identified, and what solutions are you implementing to reach young people?*

- **Reaching other vulnerable groups and engaging them in research (ADVANCE, ASPbelong, MENTBEST):** *How did you decide which groups were important to target? What strategies have you designed to engage them in research?*

- **Peer-to-peer engagement: collaborating with people with lived experience of mental health conditions challenges and solutions (BootStRaP & MENTBEST):** *Increasingly, the importance of co-creation with people with lived experience of mental health conditions is being recognised. How can this group be involved in a meaningful way so the design and implementation of strategies are adapted to their needs? We will also hear from someone with lived experience involved in the MENTBEST project.*

Q&A (25')

Final Message by Prof. Benedikt Amann (5')

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Meet our speakers!

Panellist: Maria Marti Castaner is a clinical psychologist and Associate Professor at the Center for Migration Ethnicity and Health, at the department of Public Health, Copenhagen University. Her research focuses on understanding how factors at the individual, family, and social level create inequalities in mental health and develop and evaluate mental health promotion and prevention interventions for vulnerable groups. She is very interested in the transmission of mental health across generations, particularly in the context of migration, and how public mental health interventions can reduce the effects of mental distress and illness from one generation to the next. Currently, she is involved in several projects across Denmark, Spain, and the United States that take different approaches (from digital solutions to community-based social interventions) and methods to prevent mental distress and illness in young and adult populations.

Maria Marti Castaner
Copenhagen University
ADVANCE

Panellist: Dr Valeria Motta is a philosopher with a background in the philosophy of science and phenomenology. She specializes in qualitative research, exploring the complexities of loneliness and intersubjectivity. Her work examines how social isolation shapes individual and collective identities, and how empathy and shared understanding foster meaningful connections. Dr. Motta also investigates communication beyond human interaction—encompassing artificial intelligence, machines, and the natural world—to understand how these relationships influence our sense of belonging and identity across the lifespan. Currently working with ASPbelong, she refines methods to capture the unique dynamics of young people's experiences and how vulnerability plays a role in their connection to the world, others and themselves.

Valeria Motta
University of Birmingham
ASP-Belong

Panellist: Ella is the Youth Engagement Lead at Euro Youth Mental Health, working to ensure young peoples' voices are centered within scientific research. She is a passionate facilitator and youth worker who has worked across mental health inpatient settings, hospital A&E departments, schools, residential children's homes, and in the co-production of secure services.

Ella Sheltawy
Euro Youth Mental Health
BOOTSTRAP

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Meet our speakers!

Panellist: Dr Hester Sijtsma is a postdoctoral researcher at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU). Her research focuses on social cognition, social relationships, and wellbeing in adolescents. Hester completed her PhD research at the VU on different facets and individual differences in adolescent trust behavior.

Hester Sijtsma
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
IMPROVA

Panellist: A licensed psychologist and senior researcher with more than a decade of international humanitarian mental health work experience from research and clinical to strategic and senior expert level. Having lived and worked in South America, Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa and Europe, Dr. Westerlund's research interests encompass cross-cultural psychology, evidence-based practices in mental health, implementation research on psychological interventions and psychosocial reactions among populations affected by crisis situations.

Minja Westerlund
University of Turku
RECONNECTED

Panellist: Certified psychologist with studies in psychology, philosophy, and theology. Currently working as a Research Associate at Heidelberg University Hospital in the Department of General Internal Medicine & Psychosomatics. Experienced in teaching digital mental health, communication skills, and biofeedback. Current research focuses on digital interventions for mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders, as well as neurofeedback. Additional areas of study include medical sociology, patient social relationships, and the application of computer linguistics in psychosomatic research.

Gwendolyn Mayer
Universität Heidelberg
SMILE

Panellist: Daniela Laura Gatto is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist whose research focuses on psychological trauma and complex PTSD. As part of MentBest, she coordinates trainings for stakeholders, emphasizing the adaptation of these trainings to address the needs of vulnerable groups. She also works on the cultural adaptation of materials to effectively reach different at-risk populations within the community, aiming for early detection of depression and the prevention of suicide.

Daniela Gatto
Hospital del Mar Research Institute
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Benedikt Amann
Hospital del Mar Research Institute
MENTBEST

Webinar moderator: Professor Benedikt Amann is the Director of the Research Unit of the Forum Center, Hospital del Mar Research Institute, and an Associate Professor at the Universitat Pompeu i Fabra. He is also a psychiatrist, EMDR psychotherapist, and coordinator of two Psychiatry Units at the Forum Center, Mental Institute of the Hospital del Mar.

Jose Luis Ayuso Mateos
Univeridad Autónoma de Madrid
MENTBEST

Guest speaker: Jose Luis Ayuso Mateos is a Professor in Psychiatry and Director of the Collaborating Center of the World Health Organization for Research and Training in Mental Health Services at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. He is an internationally recognized expert in the areas of nosology, epidemiology, and management and prevention of mental disorders and suicidal behaviour. He has extensive experience in cohort studies and their implementation in the general and clinical population. He was a member of the Scientific Advisory Board for the revision of the Mental and Behavioral Diseases chapter of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) and he is currently part of the WHO Advisory Group on Training and Implementation for ICD-11 MBND.

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