

## **Dawn of a New Day for Mental Health Systems**

June 2, 2021

Dr. Daniel Vigo has been appointed Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Mental Health Systems (IJMHS). In his inaugural editorial, Dr. Vigo discusses his plans for the IJMHS to bridge the "knowledge to action" gap by encouraging translational research and implementation science through new areas of focus.

*“We are at the gates of an unfamiliar world, where mental health has captured the attention of anyone who has been listening to the public conversation about societal priorities. Grass-roots advocates, people with lived experience, their families, public figures in all walks of life—from artists to sports people—have come out through traditional and new media platforms to publicly acknowledge their own mental health struggles and demand adequate funding for mental health research and services.”*

The IJMHS has successfully contributed to driving new research within the mental health systems domain in the past fourteen years, and Dr. Vigo posits three important developments that will considerably impact the outlook of future endeavours:

### **1. The global push for universal health coverage**

The Sustainable Development Goal number 3 embodies an explicit pledge to commit national research funds to mental health research. Not only committing national research funds to mental health research, organizations will be given opportunities to develop innovative mechanisms to support evaluation. The United Nations and its agencies, particularly the World Health Organization, have begun to prioritize mental health understanding it is one of the central challenges of our time.

*“During the past decade, leaders of private and public organizations, jurisdictions, nations, and multilaterals have pledged their commitments to universal health coverage inclusive of mental health, and there is a growing recognition that, in order to achieve this, all levels of research need to advance in lockstep, including basic, clinical, and health systems research.”*

### **2. The exponential growth of digital innovation**

The combination of task-shifting and infinitely scalable digital tools offers a concrete program to scale-up mental health services with a minimal marginal cost. For low-income settings, extra effort is required to distribute materials and expand coverage; however, with the expansion in technology this is easier to conduct.

### **3. The COVID-19 pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how costly it is to have unprepared, fragmented systems. Likewise, what mental health services lack are the pragmatic, real-world implementation and translational studies assessing the impact of integrating these innovations into existing health systems.

The IJMHS aims to contribute to democratizing mental health services by guiding the critical research programs that will inform the decision-making process required. Four editorial priority areas will be incorporated to the general focus of their journal. In addition, a section on field experiences will be included to provide a platform for meaningful local implementation experiences that may not conform to typical research papers.

There are 4 main priority areas highlighted to strengthen the IJMHS:

1. **Digital Health and Mental Health Systems** will seek to incentivize and disseminate research focusing on the integration of digital tools into existing systems and services.
2. **The Substance Use and Mental Health Systems** will highlight the need to consider mental health and substance use together when developing services and systems, in a world where the patterns of substance use are rapidly shifting
3. **The Mental Health Systems Planning Editorial Priority** will encourage research and submissions that stem from collaborations between mental health researchers and decision-makers geared towards informing prioritization and resource allocation
4. **Mental Health Systems for Populations in Need** will focus on population groups that are particularly underserved from a mental health systems perspective

In sum, the IJMHS aspires to be a reliable source for mental health systems research arising globally. It will continue to foster innovation in low- and middle-income countries and increase the visibility of traditionally and/or systematically underfunded research.

**Read the Full Paper at:**

[https://link.springer.com/epdf/10.1186/s13033-021-00475-x?sharing\\_token=oy4MNNXhRCuhhHi0dosODG\\_BpE1tBhCbnbw3BuzI2RMdD17FTZqqUYvgwZeNVng4rQ-pUUS\\_jN7Qy-9TK5fLi9-MznhmC379JOMaKsohMjhxVyl2\\_jrxd0RVPvmDGIa08bqTB1nNcxjxPmeSQLtq4pGG615Gpze9nlWOHd7ef7c%3D](https://link.springer.com/epdf/10.1186/s13033-021-00475-x?sharing_token=oy4MNNXhRCuhhHi0dosODG_BpE1tBhCbnbw3BuzI2RMdD17FTZqqUYvgwZeNVng4rQ-pUUS_jN7Qy-9TK5fLi9-MznhmC379JOMaKsohMjhxVyl2_jrxd0RVPvmDGIa08bqTB1nNcxjxPmeSQLtq4pGG615Gpze9nlWOHd7ef7c%3D)

Source: Vigo, D. (2021). Dawn of a new day for mental health systems. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, 15(1), 49. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-021-00475-x>

<https://ijmhs.biomedcentral.com/about/editorial-board>

