WHO’s key messages

**Depression is a growing health problem both globally and in China.**
- Globally, an estimated 322 million people of all ages suffer from depression. This represents over 4% of the global population.
- In China more than 54 million people (4.2% of the population) suffer from depression.

**More needs to be and must be done to address depression in China.** China has taken important first steps to provide basic services to patients who suffer from mental conditions, but proper diagnosis and treatment for depression is still rare, especially in underserved regions.

- **China needs an expanded mental health workforce, distributed across the country.** In 2014, China had about 23,000 psychiatrists — 1.7 for every 100,000 people, compared to Russia and US that had 11 and 12 for every 100,000, respectively.
- **Equitable and affordable access to mental health services are in high demand.** Affordable and quality mental health services should be made available to all citizens not just those living in the wealthier cities.
- **Robust quality data are needed to allow policy makers to make informed decisions.** A lack of available, credible data on both prevalence and treatment hinders government and service providers from offering a more targeted and appropriate response.
- **End the shame.** Stigma regarding mental health issues remains high, preventing many patients from seeking care.
- **Mental disorders impose an enormous burden on society, not just in terms of health but also economic burden due to lost economic output.** In China, depression costs the nation USD 7.8 billion every year in lost work days, medical expenses and funeral expenses. Globally, depression was estimated to cost at least USD 800 billion (2010) in lost economic output. That’s more than USD 100/year for every person on the planet.

**The good news is that depression can be treated.**

- **Investing in depression makes sense.** USD 1 of investment in treatment for depression and anxiety leads to a return of USD 4 in better health and ability to work.

**The more we reduce stigma and increase awareness, the better we can manage and overcome this hidden disease. Feeling down – let’s talk.**
Depression: Facts and Figures

Global issue—burden on the rise

- An estimated 322 million people of all ages suffer from depression, or more than 4% of the global population. The number of people living with depression increased by over 18% between 2005 and 2015.
- On average 1 in 10 people have suffered from major depressive disorders at least once in their lifetime.
- Depression is more common among women (5.1%) than men (3.6%).
- Although older ages are more affected, depressive disorders often start at a young age making it hard for those suffering from depression to engage in normal social life.
- Depression results from a complex interaction of social, psychological, genetic (for major depressive disorder) and biological factors. People who have gone through adverse life events (unemployment, bereavement, psychological trauma) are susceptible to depression. Depression can trigger a vicious cycle: depression leads to more stress and daily dysfunction, which worsens the depression. At its worst, depression can lead to suicide.
- It is estimated that less than half of those with depression are treated, and in many countries less than 10% receive treatment.

Major Economic burden

- Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide (more than 80% of depression disorders occur in low and middle income countries), and is a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease.
- In 2010, depression alone was estimated to cost at least USD 800 billion in lost economic output. That’s more than USD 100/year for every person on the planet.
- USD 1 of investment in treatment for depression and anxiety leads to a return of USD 4 in better health and ability to work.

Depression – Situation in China

- More than 54 million people (4.2% of the population) suffer from depression. Prevalence rates in China are estimated to be similar to global rates (4.4%).
- A nation-wide survey of 500,000 men and women in China shows that major depressive disorders are positively associated with rural residency, and low income status.
- In China, like in most underserved area of the world, less than 2 out 10 patients sought medical help or took medications.
- There is an estimated 1.2 million youth in China aged 15-24 years suffering from depression disorders.
- Prevalence of depression in university students is reported to be high: 23.8% (similar figures from UK universities).
- A 2015 report from Unicef shows that depression rates among adolescents in rural areas is higher than the rate among city dwellers in the same age range.
- In China, depression costs the nation USD 7.8 billion every year in lost work days, medical expenses and funeral expenses.

Barriers to access to diagnosis and care in China

- In 2014 China had about 23,000 psychiatrists— 1.7 for every 100,000 people compared to Russia and US that had 11 and 12 for every 100,000, respectively.
In China, few nurses and social workers have experience in psychiatry. Psychiatrists are paid less and have lower status than other medical specialists.\textsuperscript{x}

Shame and stigma are frequently cited as barriers to accessing diagnosis and treatment for depression and other mental health conditions.

China’s response: major efforts over the last decade

- In 2004, China launched the 686 Program which moved mental health care out of the specialty mental hospital into community settings, and made rehabilitation and recovery of mental conditions central to the clinical activities of core multifunctional teams.\textsuperscript{xi}
- In 2012, China passed its first mental-health law. The bill called for more facilities, an increase in their staff and efforts to raise awareness of the issue in schools, universities and workplaces. It advised against confining sufferers against their will.
- More recently, in December 2016, the State Council issued a policy document that specifically takes into account common mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety. This document signed by 22 ministries and state bodies called for a multi-sectoral approach to addressing mental health disorders.


\textsuperscript{ii} Depression and Other Common Mental Disorders: Global Health Estimates. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2017. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

\textsuperscript{iii} Ibid


\textsuperscript{v} Ibid

\textsuperscript{vi} \url{http://www.thelancet.com/commissions/adolescent-health-and-wellbeing}


\textsuperscript{viii} 2015 Unicef report: “Situation analysis on adolescent health in China”

\textsuperscript{ix} Caixin study in 2015

\textsuperscript{x} Mental Illness, Ending the Shame - The Economist January 28th 2017 53

\textsuperscript{x} Good, Mary-Jo DelVecchio, and Byron J Good. 2012. “Significance of the 686 Program for China in Global Mental Health.” Shanghai Archives of Psychiatry 24 (3): 175-177