



Mental Health in an Unequal World

The theme for World Mental Health Day 2021 is 'Mental Health in an Unequal World'. This theme was chosen by a global vote including members of the World Federation for Mental Health. It was chosen because of widening health, economic and social inequalities in the world we live in.

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Access to mental health services is unequal, with most people in low-income countries unable to access mental health services at all. The investment in mental health, even in higher income countries, is disproportionate to the overall health budget and there are deficiencies in the quality of care. Those who suffer with mental health disorders continue to experience stigma and discrimination, which also affects those around them.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted health inequalities and will continue to affect all of us in some way. Many bereave the loss of loved ones or are survivors trying to cope with the effects of serious illness. Many have lost their jobs or face extremely challenging working conditions. Seafarers are confined to their ships, uncertain when they will be reunited with families and fear not being able to access medical care when they need it. For medical care practitioners and all key workers to whom we owe so much, the pandemic is sure to leave mental scars long into the future.

All of us have been affected by social distancing measures, though ironically there has been a positive effect in that the pandemic has raised awareness around the importance of mental health. Wise words are in the saying that “we should lock-in what we have learnt from lockdowns”. There are already many good initiatives underway in our communities and workplaces. The greater challenge is to ensure that no-one is left alone without help.

[For more guidance about seafarer mental health, see our article – Seafarers in a time of pandemic – strategies for maintaining and improving mental well being](#)