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PRESS RELEASE

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY 10 October 2006 "BUILDING AWARENESS – REDUCING RISKS: MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUICIDE"

The 2006 World Mental Health Day Campaign "***Building Awareness – Reducing Risk: Mental Illness and Suicide***" focuses on a major public health problem. The World Health Organization estimates that there are one million suicide deaths each year, representing 1.4 percent of the total global burden of disease; more people die by suicide each year than are killed by homicide, wars and terrorist attacks combined.

The risk factors for suicide are multiple and typically individuals who die by suicide experience more than one risk factor. The World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) highlights the role that ***mental illness (including substance abuse and dependence) can play in risk for suicide***. However, the periods of risk for suicide among persons with mental illness vary with the illness or illnesses faced, individual psychiatric and family history, course and success of treatment, as well as the individuals' social context.

Mental Health Europe (MHE) shares the vision of the WFMH that ***good mental health care and mental health promotion can reduce the risk of suicide among people with a mental illness***. Suicides should not be seen as a tragic and unavoidable aspect of mental illnesses. Tackling the problem of suicide amongst the mentally ill requires both health care based and public health initiatives. Health care schemes must strive towards prompt diagnosis of those with mental illnesses, adequate treatment and comprehensive rehabilitation programmes; while public health approaches need to emphasize that ***mental illness is treatable and that suicide is preventable***.

Hope must be conveyed so that those in need of help are more likely to come forward. The 2006 World Mental Health Day Campaign "***Building Awareness – Reducing Risk: Mental Illness and Suicide***" encourages the global mental health community to ***make reducing the risk of suicide among people with mental illnesses a high priority*** – recognising that, left untreated, mental illness can be fatal and thus they must be addressed as an issue of utmost importance.

For further information on World Mental Health Day, contact: World Federation for Mental Health, www.wfmh.org, wmhday@wfmh.com, or Mental Health Europe, www.mhe-sme.org, info@mhe-sme.org

Mental Health Europe - Santé Mentale Europe is a European non-governmental organisation committed to the promotion of positive mental health, prevention of mental distress and protection of human rights for users and ex-users of mental health services, their families and carers.