Reflections on the XVII World Congress of Psychiatry 2017

Peykan GENÇOĞLU GÖKALP

Turkish Neuropsychiatric Society Vice President of the Administrative Board, Psychiatrist, Psychoanalyst, Retired Faculty Member

The World Psychiatric Association (WPA) is a global organization of psychiatric societies, aiming to develop the field of psychiatry through the promotion of training and professional solidarity as well as the implementation of the highest ethical standards in mental health. The WPA also works on the rights and the best care and treatment of individuals with mental disorders.

The WPA was founded in 1950 and currently has 138 member societies from 118 countries, representing more than 200000 psychiatrists. The Turkish Neuropsychiatric Society (TNpS) is among the founder members of WPA since its inception in 1950 and was represented by Prof. İhsan Şükrü Aksel during the first General Assembly.

The first president of the WPA was Jean Delay and the first Secretary General was Henry Ey, esteemed and legendary names of the period. To date, the TNpS and the Psychiatric Association of Turkey have collaborated with the WPA at international congresses, and members of the psychiatric community in Turkey have actively worked at the WPA Sections.

VII. World Congress of Psychiatry, which was held in Athens in 1989, was the first World Congress that I attended. I was a second-year resident in psychiatry; I thought “world congresses would not be in a so close neighboring country, I have to go”, and got on a bus from Istanbul to Athens, a 24-hour journey. The participants from Turkey were active, and many of us presented posters or oral papers. Our professors, including Oğuz Arkonaç and Ahmet Göğüş among many others, were “keeping an eye” on us juniors during the sessions.

The lively atmosphere and listening to lectures delivered by major figures of psychiatry, many of whom were the authors of the textbooks that we studied, was like a dream. During that period, congresses wherein international faculty members participated were not yet frequent in Turkey.

The next World Congress of Psychiatry (WCP) that I attended was the X. WCP, which took place in Madrid in 1996. I was a junior member of the executive committee of the TNpS. The President, Prof. Özcan Köknel, and the Secretary General, (then) Assoc. Prof. Raşit Tükel, proposed that I represent the Society in the General Assembly of the WPA, and the EC confirmed the proposal.

This duty was an important step for me in learning a lot regarding international relations in psychiatry and the significance and function of professional societies for the members and for the profession. In the Madrid World Congress, the document on ethics, the Madrid Declaration, was a major item of the agenda. The text of the declaration was discussed in detail, and each item was voted in the General Assembly and amended. It was a great experience for me to be a part of this process. I translated the Madrid Declaration into Turkish (Nöropsikiyatri Arşivi / Archives of Neuropsychiatry, Nov 1996) right after the World Congress. The WPA was the “United Nations of world psychiatry” for me, and after the Psychiatric Association of Turkey became a member of the WPA, the entire psychiatric community of Turkey became a part of the international community.

XVII. World Congress of Psychiatry- Berlin

The World Congress-2017 was organized in collaboration with the German Psychiatric Association (DGPPN) in Berlin on October 8–12, 2017. The main theme was “*Psychiatry of the 21st Century: Context, Controversies and Commitment.*” The first day of the congress started with an opening ceremony. In his opening speech, the WPA President (now, Immediate Past President), Dinesh Bhugra, emphasized the mission of the WPA and explained the importance of social justice for individuals with mental disorders through the symbol of a Blue Morpho butterfly. He also stated that there would be 900 sessions, with more than 10000 participants. Following Dinesh Bhugra, chairs of the scientific and organizing committees, Andreas Heinz, Peter Falkai, and Sir Simon Wessely, addressed the audience.

Cite this article as: Gençoğlu Gökalg P. Reflections on the XVII World Congress of Psychiatry 2017. Arch Neuropsychiatry 2017; 54:289-290.

Correspondence Address: Peykan Gençoğlu Gökalg, Türk Nöropsikiyatri Derneği İkinci Başkanı, Psikiyatri Uzmanı, Psikanalist, Emekli Öğretim Üyesi E-mail: peykangok@yahoo.com

Received: 14.12.2017 **Accepted:** 25.12.2017

©Copyright 2017 by Turkish Association of Neuropsychiatry - Available online at www.noropsikiyatriarsivi.com

Another prominent figure in the scientific history of the world psychiatry, Prof. Jules Angst from the Department of Psychiatry of the University of Zurich, came on the stage to receive the Jean Delay (the first President of the WPA) Award. Prof. Angst is now 92 years old and is still supervising his colleagues and research teams. He started his career in the Brghlzli Hospital in Zurich as a student of Manfred Bleuler. He had been trained as a Jungian analyst.

In his 60-year-long work, he conducted extensive research on the epidemiology of depression and anxiety disorders, clinical psychiatry, and psychopharmacology. Consequently, he and his collaborators illuminated many clinical dilemmas relating to the diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric disorders.

On October 9, the sessions started with high speed. The German National Congress of Psychiatry was also conducting parallel sessions. The scientific program of the World Congress started at 8.15 am and went on until 8 pm during which 30–40 parallel meetings were held. The participants had to grab sandwiches and drinks while running to the meeting rooms.

There were protest groups both in front of the congress venue and in the city center, carrying flags displaying slogans regarding discrimination and the use of medications. They held a press conference with the participating members from the congress scientific committee and the European Association of Family Members of Individuals with Mental Disorders (EUFAMI).

There were 44 main topics in the congress. Human rights, discrimination against individuals with mental disorders, addictions, women's mental health, ethics, mood disorders, adolescent mental health, and aging are some of these topics. Plenary sessions, lectures by the WPA leaders, sectional and regional symposia, workshops, and poster presentations were well attended.

There was a special track and program for the Early Career Psychiatrists (ECPs). Topics, such as preparation for a career in academia, the importance of working in psychiatric societies, writing scientific papers, and networking, provided valuable information for young colleagues. Many young psychiatrists from Turkey were elected by the WPA as early career fellows on the basis of their posters. We got together with young colleagues from Turkey in a warm atmosphere and exchanged ideas and future plans.

The General Assembly 2017

On October 10, the World Mental Health Day, the General Assembly of the WPA was held. The agenda covered reports of the officers of the EC for the 2014–2017 triennium. Then, the elections for the positions of President Elect, Secretaries for Education, Sections and Publications, and the Zone Representatives were conducted by electronic ballot.

The TNpS was represented as the voting delegate by the Vice President, Prof. Dr. Peykan Gkalp, EC Member; Dr. Evrim Gde ten, and Prof. Dr. Blent Cokun were observer delegates. Prof. Dr. Yildiz Akvardar, the Vice President of the EC represented the Psychiatric Association of Turkey (PAT) as the voting delegate. The Past President of the PAT, Prof. Dr. Simavi Vahip, also participated in the General Assembly as an observer.

The results of the elections were as follows:

President Elect: Afzal Javed (UK); Secretary for Education: Roger Mann Kin NG (Hong Kong-China); Secretary for Sections: Thomas G. Schulze (Germany); Secretary for Publications: Michel Botbol (France).

Zvi Zemishlany (Israel) was elected as the Zone Representative of the Southern European Zone that we are a member of.

After the elections, Helen Herrman, who took over the office of Presidency from Dinesh Bhugra, presented the Action Plan of the 2017–2020 triennium.

Some Highlights from the Meetings

The symposium titled "The Status of Women and Mental Health" was organized by the Women's Mental Health Section of the PAT. Peykan Gkalp and Yildiz Akvardar chaired the session. The subtitles in this session were as follows: Yildiz Akvardar "Early and Forced Marriages in Turkey", Sibel Kobiyk "Women Shelters in Turkey", Nee Direk "Women Refugees and Mental Health", and Zerrin Olau "Violence and Crimes against Women". The participants in the audience were both males and females, almost equal in number. During the discussion, the questions and contributions of the Head of the Department of Psychosomatics in Erlangen University, Prof. Yeim Erim, added a lot to the subject.

The symposium organized by the WPA Women's Mental Health Section "War Against Women, Goes On?" put forward many shocking truths. The first woman president of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) (1985–1986), Prof. Carol Nadelson, stated that violence against women is a war and that unseen war in hidden fronts along with "active war" is going on as a result of discrimination and patriarchal policies and views. Another APA (woman) President (2008–2009), Prof. Nada Stotland, in her presentation titled "Policies Against Women" stated that, in current American society and political arena, women's rights in the field of health are going backwards. Prof. Gail Robinson, a psychiatrist and obstetrics and gynecologist spoke on "Global Reaction to Rape: Accusing the Victim" and pointed to the fact that the gender-based sexual violence is still going on, and named it as "war against women".

Exhibitions and meetings on Psychiatry and the Arts formed the sociopolitical and historical perspectives of the Congress. The city of Berlin, which was a stage for the Second World War and great human miseries, which was divided and then reunited, was hosting the World Congress. The exhibitions, installations, and documentaries under the theme of "National Socialism and Psychiatry" had titles, such as "The sick and the disabled: Labeled, persecuted and perished" by Dorothea Buck: (the woman who has been diagnosed with schizophrenia) and "The Sky and Beyond" were among many other monuments, museums, and exhibitions dedicated to the atrocities of the War and the post-war period. These memorials indicate that the Berliners are ready to face and accept what their ancestors have done to humans and that they have to remember everything in detail, not to experience it again.

There were also visits to psychiatric institutions in Berlin, which attracted the attention of many colleagues.

The WPA, which includes congresses of different scales and contents that bring together the global psychiatric community; the scientific journal "World Psychiatry" with an impact factor of 26.56 and which has a consultative status to the United Nations; and the World Health Organization, function as a sheltering roof and frame for our professional sphere. I recommend my colleagues, particularly younger ones, to get involved in the scientific and organizational network of the WPA through the channels of our national societies, following the footsteps of İhsan Skr Aksel, Metin zek, and the Past Secretary General, Levent Key. Such joint activities and collaboration will create mutual enrichment and development in the field of mental health.