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DR. Hisham Ramy (R) and Dr. Alexis Moyrand (2nd L) addressing the GSMH event that was held in Cairo last week.

Mental health awareness campaign starts

THE General Secretariat of Mental Health (GSMH) has started a major campaign to raise awareness of mental health.

The campaign, sponsored by an international pharmaceutical company, aims to eliminate the social stigma associated with mental illness and to strengthen mental health care. Its focus is to prevent mental disorders, provide Egyptian patients with care and improve their chances of recovery, reducing mortality and disability rates.

According to Dr Hisham Ramy, the GSMH Secretary General, who announced the start of the campaign at a recent Cairo press conference, raising general health awareness in Egypt is important and often commands attention and concern, but mental health awareness efforts are rare.

The campaign is to combat the shame associated with mental diseases, as well as oppression, abuse and insult, Dr Ramy added.

Mr. Alexis Moyrand, General Manager of a pharmaceutical company, said that mental health was an integral part of the enjoyment of well-being, including the ability to form relationships, study, and work and practise hobbies and make decisions and daily choices.

The campaign will raise awareness and knowledge of mental and social diseases and disorders through early detection of mental disorders and associated problems to enable intervention by mental health-care professionals.

In addition it will seek to reduce the stigma attached to mental illness due to society's lack of understanding of mental health, which diminishes a patient's chances of recovery.

GSMH, as the governmental body responsible for laying out mental health plans and strategies in Egypt, has set raising awareness of mental diseases as a goal of its five-year strategy for 2015-2020, according to Dr Ramy.

An integral component is to increase

the chances of early therapy and rehabilitating patients and re-integrating them into society while improving the level of mental health services provided by competent institutions.

Mr. Moyrand said: "Clarifying misconceptions is an important part of the company's commitment to social responsibility which aims to provide exceptional care for patients."

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics, almost 450 million people worldwide suffer from mental disorders. Mental illness is the second main reason of illnesses and mortality in developing countries, where 80 per cent of those suffering from severe psychological disorders are not receiving treatment.

"I'm personally proud to support the General Secretariat in this marvellous campaign. It emphasises the company's belief in the importance of early detection and public awareness of mental illness." Mr. Moyrand said.



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