MINISTER’S MESSAGE
WORLD HEALTH DAY 2017 (7TH APRIL)

THEME: Depression: Let’s talk

The World Health Day is a global health awareness day celebrated every year on 7th April.

It is evident that increased awareness is one of the first steps towards a better prevention of illness and disease. In Seychelles, as our country continues to face increased burdens of non-communicable diseases, awareness is one of the best medicines.

Particularly as we do not see our nation’s health as the absence of disease- but rather as a quest to improve our overall wellbeing as a nation.

Each year a theme is selected to highlight a priority area of public health. The day provides an opportunity for individuals in every community to get involved in activities that can lead to better health.

This year World Health Day will be celebrated under the theme Depression: Let’s talk.

It is hard to talk about mental illness, due to the stigma that surrounds mental illnesses in general. This occurs, despite services being available to help manage all associated conditions. At times knowing what or how to say it is not obvious but talking about your mental health can bring a lot of changes.

The overall goal of this one-year campaign, beginning on 7 April 2017, World Health Day, is that more people with depression, in all countries, seek and get help. More specifically, the aim is to achieve the following:

- To better inform the general public about depression, its causes and possible consequences, including suicide, and what help is or can be available for prevention and treatment;
- To get people with depression to seek help
- To encourage family, friends and colleagues of people living with depression to provide support

Depression is a common and treatable medical condition that often causes feelings of sadness, loss of interest, withdrawal from others, and a loss of energy and confidence. Depression has an enormous impact on a person’s ability to pursue happiness and diminishes our drive to succeed and enjoy life.
It is a highly prevalent illness. Globally, it is responsible for more ‘years lost’ to disability than any other condition. According to World Health Organization around 300 million people are suffering from depression world-wide — and the fact that it lasts for many years. When ranked by disability and death combined, depression comes ninth behind prolific killers such as heart disease, stroke and HIV. But By the year 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that depression will be the number two cause of "lost years of healthy life" worldwide.

In spite of this startling fact depression is an illness which is widely undiagnosed and untreated because of stigma, lack of effective therapies and inadequate mental-health resources. Almost half of the world’s population lives in a country with only two psychiatrists per 100,000 people.

**Local situation**

Seychelles is indeed not spared from depression and its associated burden. Over the years, the service has seen a gradual increase in the number of clients coming into contact with either the psychiatric or psychological service or need of both. From 6056 in 2015 to 7628 in 2016.

It is estimated that the prevalence of depression in Seychelles is 4.0%, and total Years Lived with Disability (YLD) is 7.1% whereas anxiety stands at 3.3% and 3.3%.

I am encouraging you all to go out there and start a conversation in your school, workplace and community. There is a need to support people with mental illness so that they can come out of the shadows and seek help otherwise the statistics will become a reality.

Remember that Depression is an illness, not a weakness. If you suspect that you or a loved one may be depressed, it’s important to address the problem right away.

Let us also take the opportunity to celebrate the contribution of health workers towards building the resilience our country to be able to tackle depression, and contribute to a robust health system.

From psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses and all the other health professionals who contribute to deliver support to those in need- we salute their devotion and commitment.

Please join the celebration and get all the information you need to lead a conversation about mental health and help spread the word.

It is our health, and our responsibility.