

THE OFFICE OF DEIB OBSERVES

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK



NJDMAVA DEIB DISCLAIMER

Mental Illness Awareness Week is held every year during the month of October, specifically from the 5th to the 11th. This week is honored within the U.S. to help raise awareness, combat stereotypes, and educate society on the truths of mental health. It highlights the experiences of those living with mental illness and promotes the importance of early intervention, treatment, and support. Advocated for by groups like the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Congress decided to officially establish the awareness week in 1990.

Educating society about mental illness is crucial not only for minimizing misconceptions but also for encouraging a more inclusive, equitable, and inclusive world. Mental health affects people across all demographics. Culture, race, and personal differences often affect how individuals experience and access support for their concerns. By welcoming mental health education into broader conversations, we acknowledge that

FACT: ANXIETY DISORDERS ARE THE MOST COMMONLY DIAGNOSED MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS IN THE U.S., WHILE DISORDERS LIKE SCHIZOPHRENIA ARE THE LEAST COMMON TO BE DIAGNOSED AND REMAIN HEAVILY STIGMATIZED.

mental health conditions are important to people's identity and ensures better access to resources or services. A better understanding means making inclusion not just a value, but a lived reality.

The term “mental illness” originated in the 19th century when mental health conditions began to be viewed through a medical lens, similar to that of physical illnesses. It helped create understanding and treatment by treating these conditions as real and able to be treated. However, some argue that use of the term “illness” can add to stigma by implying people

MENTAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS

“MENTAL ILLNESS WAS CAUSED BY DEMONIC POSSESSION OR SORCERY”

THIS WAS A COMMON BELIEF AMONGST THOSE WHO EXISTED DURING ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL TIMES. THANKS TO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, WE KNOW TODAY THAT MENTAL ILLNESSES ARE MEDICAL CONDITIONS AND CAN BE CAUSED BY MANY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES.

“ASYLUMS WERE OF GREAT SERVICE TO THOSE STRUGGLING WITH

are sick or weak. Many prefer the alternative term “mental health condition” as a more empathetic form of respect. It is important to use language that supports inclusion and understanding.

“Your state of mental health does not define who you are. It is something you experience. You walk in the rain, and you feel the rain, but you are not the rain.” — Matt Haig

Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond was a 19th-century English psychiatrist who pioneered the use of photography in the treatment and study of mental illness. He believed that photographing patients could



Above is the Image of Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond (1856)

aid in diagnosis and serve as a tool for understanding and documenting various psychiatric conditions.

His approach reflected the belief that mental disorders could be linked to expression of the body or face.

To the left is *Portrait of a patient, Surrey County Asylum, 1855, Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond*



MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

FOR CENTURIES, THOSE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS WERE PLACED IN ASYLUMS THAT CAUSED HARM WITH THE USE OF INHUMANE TREATMENTS. HEALTHCARE HAS DRASTICALLY IMPROVED FOR THE BETTER AND SEEKS TO FOCUS ON PROPER EQUITABLE RESEARCH.

“IT WAS BELIEVED THAT ONLY WOMEN SUFFERED FROM EMOTIONAL INSTABILITIES OR HYSTERIA”

TRANSLATING FROM LATIN TO MEAN “WANDERING UTERUS,” HYSTERIA WAS A TERM CREATED TO CATEGORIZE THE BEHAVIORS OR ‘ABNORMALITIES’ OF WOMEN. TODAY, WE UNDERSTAND THAT MENTAL HEALTH CAN AFFECT ANYONE, REGARDLESS OF SEX OR GENDER IDENTITY.

“THOSE DEALING WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS OFTEN PHYSICALLY APPEAR TO BE ILL”

THERE IS A HARMFUL STEREOTYPE, OFTEN PORTRAYED IN FILM AND TV, THAT THOSE STRUGGLING WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH PHYSICALLY PRESENT AS DISHEVELED OR UNSTABLE. IN REALITY, MOST WHO DEAL WITH THESE STRUGGLES OFTEN DO SO INTERNALLY. THIS IS TO SAY THERE IS NO “LOOK” AND ASSUMPTIONS BASED ON APPEARANCE ONLY WORSEN STIGMA.