

INTER-INSTITUTIONAL WEBINAR SERIES ON “COVID-19 AND MENTAL HEALTH”
INAUGURATED BY PROF. TALAT AHMAD, VC, KU; CALLS UPON TEACHERS FOR
EXTENDING NECESSARY MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TO STUDENTS IN COPING WITH
PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

While inaugurating an inter-institutional online lecture series on “COVID-19 and mental health” Vice-Chancellor, University of Kashmir, Prof. Talat Ahmad called upon teachers to extend all possible mental health support to the students in adjusting to the new normal and coping up with the ill-effects of the pandemic particularly on their mental health.

Webinar series was organized by the UGC-Human Resource Development Centre, University of Kashmir in collaboration with Govt. Degree College, Pampore and the Dept. of Biotechnology, Central University of Kashmir. Principal and Dean, Govt. Medical College, Srinagar, Dr. Samia Rashid was the “Guest of Honour” at this occasion.

While chairing the inaugural session, Prof. Talat further said that “we need to honour the centuries-old practices and invaluable tools that are woven into India’s culture like yoga and can be used by the young students to deal with their anxiety and stress during this age of disruption”. He called upon students to exercise frequently, take adequate rest and interact freely with their friends and relatives on various social media platforms.

In his presidential address Prof. Talat further emphasized that the Govt. of India’s new National Education Policy has made it abundantly clear that education is a “great leveler” and in order to protect this promise for the current generation, it is imperative that we help students and their families deal with the anxiety, stress and loss that the current pandemic has brought”. He expressed satisfaction on the participation of teachers from multiple higher education institutions of the valley in the webinar and urged to continue the same with full vigour and enthusiasm.

Director, UGC-HRDC, Prof. Shabir Ahmad Bhat while talking about the role of leadership in difficult situations quoted Bennis and Thomas saying that , “a crucible is a transformative experience through which an individual comes to a new or altered sense of identity and these are the trials, tests and failures that should prompt us to emerge stronger and learn some lessons for our future”. He further added that COVID-19 has created havoc all around the world and there is hardly any aspect of life that has remained unaffected apart from causing devastating impact upon the mental health of the people at large. He underscored the need for such webinars that foster the ability of an individual to find courage and meaning amidst most trying circumstances and the ability to transcend adversity and emerge stronger. He said that the webinar series is primarily aimed at training the teachers about the mental health issues particularly during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Principal and Dean, Govt. Medical College, Srinagar Guest of Honour, Dr. Samia Rashid in her address presented a detailed overview of the measures to be taken to combat the ill-effects of the pandemic particularly its negative impact on the mental health. She emphasized upon the need for continued management of patients suffering from mental illnesses through tele-medicine and also to avoid any disruptions in the supply chain through proper planning. Dr. Samia also underscored the need to address the mental health support needs of special and vulnerable populations like elderly people, patients with disabilities, marginalized communities and people living in remote areas. Dr. Samia pledged to extend full support in the proposed lecture series of HRDC in days to come.

First lecture in this series was delivered by Dr. Arshad Hussain, Professor in the Dept. of Psychiatry, Govt. Medical College, Srinagar that was attended by the teachers of the Central University of Kashmir, Govt. Degree College, Pampore besides the teachers of the University of Kashmir. In his lecture Dr. Arshad Hussain said that a measured dose of fear is an absolutely normal emotion in order to prepare ourselves for such a catastrophe as COVID-19, however we should not be so overwhelmed by the fear that we start doing irrational things. Dr. Arshad further reiterated that the resilience and coping strategies are important in countering the ill-effects of a pandemic of this magnitude. Dr. Arshad pledged to reach out to the teachers working in colleges and universities with a view to train them in cultivating such coping strategies and help their students navigate through this pandemic.

Dr. Seema Naz, Principal, Govt. Degree College, Pampore and Dr. Abid Hamid, Dept. of Biotechnology, Central University of Kashmir also spoke at this occasion and urged upon the need to collaborate in such matters so that the faculty members benefit collectively out of such academic endeavours. Webinar was coordinated and conducted by the Coordinator, UGC-HRDC, University of Kashmir, Dr. Geer Mohammad Ishaq whereas the vote of thanks was proposed by Dr. Abid Hamid of CUK and Dr. Mir Ashiq Hussain of GDC, Pampore.