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RECENT EVENTS

LVBCH 41ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE: CRAIG KRAMER KEYNOTE: THE MENTAL HEALTH MOMENT

LVBCH Annual Conference Keynote Speaker Craig Kramer began his June 6th talk, *The Mental Health Moment*, by sharing his experience with his daughter's suicide attempt. Kramer is the Mental Health Ambassador and Chair, Global Campaign for Mental Health Neuroscience External Affairs Janssen, R&D, a Johnson & Johnson Company.

He received a call from the Boston Police Department saying "We're taking her to the hospital. You need to get here right away." Kramer's daughter, then 24, had been coping with and seeking treatment for an eating disorder for years. A deadly mental illness, eating disorders cause 23 deaths a day in the US from starvation and suicide. For girls ages 15-19, the leading cause of death for the first time in recorded history is no longer childbirth; it's suicide. Half of all mental illnesses begin by the age of 14, and 75% of all mental illness starts manifesting by the age of 24.

Only later would Kramer learn that unlike other areas of health care, mental health – which includes such conditions as depression, anxiety, addiction, post traumatic, post-partum, obsessive compulsive, bipolar and schizophrenia – is not integrated with primary care and often is not covered by insurance. Often the family has to become the mental health system for loved one - an extra burden that can crush families, destroy marriages and affect work. "Imagine going to bed every night wondering if you daughter's going to be alive in the morning. You're so tired that it's difficult to function, let alone care about the project that's due on Friday."

The WHO has stated that when it comes to mental health every country is a developing country. In the US the three largest mental health facilities are the jails, not hospitals, and this incarceration occurs throughout the world. "If we don't lock you up physically, we do socially. We ostracize you. Due to a lack of understanding, no one wants to be near the crazy person for fear of catching what they have," he said. Because it goes largely untreated, two-thirds of people around the world get no care and those who do wait an average of 8-10 years before they sift through the stigma and find quality care. As a result, these illnesses progress and continue over a lifetime and so the economic costs pile up over into the tens of trillions of dollars in the coming decades.

Despite the challenges, Kramer said there are many positive trends in mental health. Young people around the world are throwing off the chains of stigma. Technologies are now, or soon will be, available to track sleep patterns, social interaction and physical isolation. Advances in neuroscience and imaging are helping us to both understand how the brain works and discover new treatments. Today, when diagnosed and treated early, even the most serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, can be treated successfully. The fragmented mental health community is beginning to align to form more consistent messaging. Finally, advocacy is having an impact and the voices of the mentally ill are finally being heard.

[ABOUT THE SPEAKERS: CLICK HERE FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE BIOS](#)

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