

KU V-C calls for serious, sustained efforts to curb drug abuse

Inaugurates four-day training programme on mental health challenges



Srinagar, Feb 24: A four-day training programme on mental health started at the University of Kashmir on Wednesday.

Vice-Chancellor Prof Talat Ahmad inaugurated the training programme, organised by the varsity's Department of Social Work (DoSW) for community-level health professionals from Budgam district.

In his presidential address, Prof Talat said the health professionals, psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors and academics will have to join hands to help address the old and new mental health challenges and concerns.

He said that mental health problems in Kashmir are not new and existed before the outbreak of Covid-19.

"The ongoing pandemic only aggravated these concerns, which will have to be addressed in a serious manner with the collective efforts of one and all," he said.

The Vice-Chancellor urged greater focus of academic institutions on addressing drug abuse among youth, alongside tackling the mental health challenges.

"We will have to nip the evil of drug abuse in the bud, both in urban and rural belts, with sustained awareness at grassroots and involving academic institutions, NGOs and health professionals in a serious manner," he said.

Prof Talat said while Kashmir has faced difficulties over the years, it has had big strength in people's sense of spirituality that they inherited culturally.

"I think people need to go back to these roots of spirituality to derive the spiritual support to address a host of ills besetting society. It will be a kind of natural healing, which needs to be highlighted and propagated," he said.

Dean of Academic Affairs Prof Shabir A Bhat called for creating a support system in academic institutions to counsel teachers and students to cruise through Covid-19 pandemic fallouts, especially related to mental health.

"We need a sustainable strategy to make this happen. It's important for academic institutions—apart from imparting regular education—to be aware of what the society is going through and provide solutions for the same," he said.

In his special address, Prof Abdul Majeed Ganai, Head, Department of Community Medicine, GMC Baramulla, referred to the perspectives and thoughts of Imam Ghazali (RA) on mental health. He said such thoughts were incorporated in the theoretical aspects of mental health but were yet to be included formally in the mental health definitions and frameworks by institutions like the World Health Organisation.

Prof Ganai said the training programmes like these help in combining academic and research studies and take the outcomes thereof to the grassroots for implementation.

In his keynote address, Prof M Maqbool, Head, Department of Psychiatry, IMHNS GMC Srinagar talked at length about various mental health concerns and challenges post-Covid19 outbreak. He said there has been a considerable increase in behavioural problems among children and substance abuse in Kashmir, apart from other deleterious fallouts of the pandemic.

Coordinator DoSW Dr Adil Bashir highlighted aims and objectives of the four-day training, which he said is part of a research activity being undertaken at the department under the sponsorship of the ICMR.

Dr Sarfaraz Ahmad from DoSW conducted proceedings of the inaugural session and also delivered a vote of thanks.