

KU V-C inaugurates mental health awareness programme

Calls for collective effort to tackle emerging challenges

Srinagar, Nov 2: It is important to talk about mental health to be able to tackle the issues and concerns related to it effectively, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kashmir Prof Talat Ahmad said on Monday.

Addressing the inaugural session of a mental health awareness programme titled “Mental Health of Emerging Generations: Issues, Challenges and Remedial Approaches”, Prof Talat said: “Mental health is something very important that we all need to talk about regularly given the alarming situation around where we have a large number of people facing varied mental health issues. If we don’t talk about these issues, it won’t be possible to address them.”

Referring to certain studies on mental health in Kashmir, Prof Talat, the chief guest on the occasion, said a study has indicated 11.3 per-cent adult population suffers from mental illness with more prevalence among women than men.

The Vice-Chancellor strongly urged involvement of educational institutions, non-governmental and social organisations to help tackle mental health challenges in a cohesive manner.

The awareness programme, to be conducted in KU’s affiliated colleges in Baramulla, Srinagar, Ganderbal, Anantnag, Pulwama and Kulgam districts, is organised by the varsity’s Department of Students Welfare (DSW).

Hailing the DSW for organising such important programmes, KU Registrar Dr Nisar A Mir called for involvement of other departments in the university, like Psychology and Social Works, for better outcomes on approaches to address the mental health challenges.

“It is important for participants here to disseminate amongst their families and friends what they understand from expert talks during the awareness programme,” he said, assuring the university’s full support to the DSW's endeavours.

In his keynote address, Prof Abdul Majid, Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, SKIMS Medical College, talked at length on mental health issues in Kashmir and how people can cope with these at individual and societal levels.

“The different quotients of mental health (physical, emotional, spiritual, social and intellectual) vary from person to person. It is this umbrella and balance thereof that make a person mentally healthy,” he said, asserting that people need to do away with “stigmatising mental health with labels and taboos.”

“We also need to understand how mental health issues get aggravated by the lack of empathy and lack of awareness in our society,” he said.

In his welcome address, Dean Students Welfare Prof Raies A Qadri said: “We often talk of physical health but seldom discuss concerns related to mental health. Nobody talks about the levels of stress and anxiety. It’s in this context we thought of

organising this programme to provide a platform for experts and students to share their concerns and views on this important topic.”

Prof GN Khaki, Director, Centre for Shaikh-ul-Alam Studies (CSAS) presided over a post-inaugural session, which, among others, was attended by Chief Proctor Prof Showkat A Shah, officials, scholars and students from various university departments. Mr Zahid, Junior Coordinator DSW conducted proceedings of the inaugural session.