**Editorial**

**Welcome to the 13th European Congress of Mental Health in Intellectual Disability**

This year, the 13th EAMHID Congress will take place from 23rd to 25th of September 2021 in Berlin, Germany. Given the recent pandemic, the conference will welcome delegates for the first time both in person and virtually. This special abstract edition includes abstracts for keynotes, symposia, oral presentations, roundtables, workshops and posters. The *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* (JIDR) and EAMHID have a long relationship and publishedthe proceedings of the first conference in Veldhoven (volume 37, supplement 1, 1993).

For those able to attend in person, I would like to welcome you to Berlin, a city steeped in history, on behalf of the association’s current President Tanja Sappok and Vice President Brian Fergus Barrett. The theme of this year’s congress is From Science to practice – improving mental health in persons with intellectual disability. With its various scientific and practice-based formats, the EAMHID 2021 Congress will contribute to improving mental health in people with an intellectual disability by fostering evidence-based treatment and highlighting innovation in support for this highly vulnerable group.

Although great strides forward in the mental health of people with an intellectual disability have been made over the last 30 years, we would like to share some of the history and work of the association to introduce this supplement.

The European Association for Mental Health in Persons with Intellectual Disability (EAMHID) has its roots in the late 1980s. It was formed out of concern society and working professionals for the quality of life of people with an intellectual disability and to address whether the mental health systems currently in place could provide mental health care for people with intellectual disabilities or was there a need for specialised mental health services this unique population. This occurred in the context of different care systems across Europe and the world. For example, in the United Kingdom intellectual disability was already recognised as a psychiatric specialty within the Royal College of Psychiatrists. With pioneers including Ken Day and Nick Bouras leading the changes by developing specialist hospital and community-based mental health services for people with an intellectual disability. Whereas in most European countries at this time, mental health care for people with an intellectual disability was not a consideration. There were some notable exceptions; for example, in the Netherlands, Anton Dosen created an international professional network to share knowledge between professionals from different countries and in 1992 organised the “European Experts Conference on Mental Health Care for People with Mental Retardation” in Veldhoven, the conclusion of which led to the formation of a European Association for Mental Health in Mental Retardation (MHMR) or EAMHID as it is now known. The first Executive Committee comprised A. Dosen (NL) President, K. Day (UK) Vice-President, W. Verhoeven (NL) secretary, and the members: C. Gaedt (G), M. van Wallenghem (B) and N. Bouras (UK), with the first Association’s congress taking place in Amsterdam in 1995. Although Europe focussed from the beginning strong relationships and participation from North America, where pioneers such as Frank Menolascino, Ludwig Sczymanski, Robert Sovner, Steven Reiss, and William Gardner were examining the specificities of behaviour and psychopathology and related diagnostic difficulties of mental disorders an intellectual disability. These early initiatives and formation of EAMHID led to the development of professional knowledge and skills and introduced bespoke training and education of professionals and carers involved in the care and support of people with an intellectual disability. These developments were at the forefront of changes to policy on the care for people with an intellectual disability in different European countries.

The EAMHID Congress is held biannually, and following the conference in Veldhoven, (which led to the formation of the Association), they have been held in London 1999, Berlin 2001, Rome 2003, Barcelona 2005, Zagreb 2007, Lisbon 2013; Manchester 2015, Luxemburg 2017 and Barcelona 2019. The congress has served to showcase scientific advances in the field as well as developments in practice, services and policy, whilst allowing the exchange of experiences and knowledge between congress participants.

The Association aimed to stimulate and facilitate international cooperation, exchange of knowledge and experiences in the field of mental health care for people with an intellectual disability, with an emphasis on the scientific study, and improvement of standards of service provision throughout European countries. Today as it did in the early days, EAMHID provides a platform for academics, health professionals and policy makers. The purpose of the Association is to facilitate international cooperation and exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of mental health in people with an intellectual disability. Special emphasis is placed on the coordination and promotion of scientific activities and improving standards of care and support throughout Europe.

Despite the Association’s achievements, there is lot more that needs to be done, we strongly believe that the robust network with its strong bonds throughout Europe will further promote well-being and health of people all over Europe. To help in this mission, we invite everybody to engage! With this in mind, I would like to thank all EAMHD members and supporters for making this Congress possible, with a special thank you to Lucy Chaplin for her help in editing this abstract edition. Finally I’d like to extend a special thank you to Tanja Sappok, Brian Fergus Barrett, the Board of the Association and the Local Organising Committee in Germany for making this Congress a reality during such a difficult time.

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