2.M. Round table: Supporting mental health of the health workforce: Recommendations from an EC Expert Panel (EXPH)

Organised by: European Commission Expert Panel on Effective Ways of Investing in Health (EXPH)
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The Expert Panel on Effective ways of investing in health (EXPH) is an interdisciplinary and independent group established by the European Commission to provide non-binding independent advice on matters related to effective, accessible and resilient health systems. In a prior opinion on resilient health and social care following the COVID-19 pandemic, the EXPH recommended that aggravated levels of psychological distress should be recognized as a public health priority. In January 2021, EXPH received a mandate to examine what is known about interventions to support the
mental health needs of essential workers, with a particular emphasis on the health workforce. The objective of this workshop is to present and discuss the findings and recommendations from the Opinion on this matter. The value added offered by this workshop is three-fold. First, it offers a multidisciplinary perspective on the mental health of the health workforce. Second, its findings on promising and/or effective interventions are evidence-based. Third, it provides a pan-European consensus opinion on a path forward towards providing support to this vulnerable group at multiple levels - from European and national policy to senior managers to occupational and mental health practitioners. The workshop will consist of 4 5-to-10-minute presentations from EXPH members and Opinion collaborators. After the first two presentations, there will be a brief 7-minute reaction session with the audience. After the last presentation, 15-20 minutes will be spent engaging in interactive discussion between the workshop panel members and the audience using a series of prescribed discussion questions. In the first presentation, the chair of the Opinion will introduce the EXPH and its collaborators and provide an overview of the mandate. In the second presentation, the conceptual framework for responding to the questions posed by the European Commission and key determinants of mental health in the health workforce will be presented. The third presentation will describe cost-effective and promising interventions relative to mental health of the health workforce and then detail conditions for the cost-effective, affordable, and inclusive. The fourth and final presentation will address the recommendations and corresponding action points garnered from this work. The interactive discussion questions to be posed to the audience include: To what extent do you see these recommendations as valuable? Has anything important been overlooked? What changes in public health research and practice are needed to effectively support the mental health of the health workforce?

**Key messages:**
- Appropriate guidance frameworks needs to be established, in some cases deserving legal status, to clearly establish mental wellbeing as an important workplace responsibility within organisations.
- The organisation, as opposed to the individual worker, is to be held accountable for worker wellbeing.