



Beirut 12th December 2021

Public Statement from the Lebanese Psychiatric Society

Seeking Help from the appropriate mental health professionals

The last few years have witnessed increased awareness of the importance of mental health on a medical and social level. This is a welcome advance, especially with the severe challenges being faced by the population of Lebanon on economic, social and health levels. In parallel to this increased awareness, we have witnessed growing interest in the traditional media and on social media, with many individuals and companies offering advice on mental health or positioning themselves as ‘experts’ in the field.

The Lebanese Psychiatric society would like to take this opportunity to remind the public that mental health care, just like any other form of healthcare, is best offered by qualified and licensed specialists in the field. This qualification is the result of years of training and experience in recognizing, diagnosing and providing treatment for psychiatric and psychological disorders.

In general, the two types of medical professionals licensed in Lebanon as specialists in delivering such care are:

- 1- **Psychiatrists:** These are medical doctors who after graduating from medical school completed a residency in an accredited psychiatric

training program in Lebanon or abroad. They are registered as specialists in the Lebanese Order of Physicians (LOP).

- 2- Psychologists and Psychotherapists: These are holders of a university degree in psychology from Lebanon or abroad who then underwent clinical training under supervision and obtained a license from the Ministry of Public Health to allow them to see patients.

In case you are unable or unwilling to see a psychiatrist, another medical doctor can legally prescribe medication as long as the doctor (General Practitioner, Neurologist, Other specialty) is aware of his own limitations in treating mental disorders and refers you to a psychiatrist when needed at the earliest opportunity. Psychologists, psychotherapists or psychiatric nurses regardless of their expertise cannot prescribe medication under any circumstances.

In addition, given the shortage in medication, we also recommend that pharmacists do not change a psychiatric medication or advise outside their competence without referring back to the prescribing doctors.

It is with communication and cooperation between all these professionals that the best outcomes are reached for the patient.

We hope this information will contribute to maintaining safe mental health care in our country.

The Executive Committee of the Lebanese Psychiatric Society