

World Health Organization Calls for End to Abusive Mental Health Practices It Says Are All Too Common

Report cites evidence indicates that involuntary mental health treatment is ineffective and can worsen an individual's condition.

WASHINGTON, DC, US, October 10, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a joint call to action for World Mental Health Day, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued new [guidance](#) on ending human rights abuses and involuntary treatment in mental health services worldwide.

"Human rights abuses and coercive practices in mental health care, supported by existing legislation and policies, are still far too common," their [news release](#) stated. "Involuntary hospitalization and treatment, unsanitary living conditions, and physical, psychological, and emotional abuse characterize many mental health services across the world."

The United Nations-affiliated entities advise a complete overhaul of mental health systems by U.N. member countries, including the United States. "Our ambition must be to transform mental health services, not just in their reach, but in their underlying values, so that they are truly responsive to the needs and dignity of the individual."

The WHO/OHCHR guidance points out the harm of non-consensual mental health treatment by worsening an individual's condition. "A growing body of evidence sets out how coercive practices negatively impact physical and mental health, often compounding a person's existing condition while alienating them from their support systems," the report says.



The World Health Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued new guidance on ending human rights abuses and involuntary treatment in mental health services worldwide.

In earlier guidance, issued in 2021, WHO stated that its opposition to involuntary mental health treatment extends to those experiencing acute mental distress. The report [noted](#) that individuals in mental health crisis “are at a heightened risk of their human rights being violated, including through forced admissions and treatment.... These practices have been shown to be harmful to people’s mental, emotional and physical health, sometimes leading to death.”

Recent research has indicated not only that forced hospitalization for mental health treatment did not benefit patients’ mental health condition or reduce their risk of suicide [1], but also increased the likelihood they would attempt suicide after release. [2]

The Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) has been a global leader in the fight to eliminate coercive and abusive mental health practices, including involuntary detention, seclusion, restraints, forced drugging, and electroshock.



The World Health Organization says individuals in mental health crisis are at increased risk of having their human rights violated through forced admissions and treatment, which can be harmful to people’s mental, emotional and physical health.

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World Health Organization/Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

CCHR has long pushed for widespread adoption of a Mental Health Declaration of Human Rights, which lays out fundamental human rights in the field of mental health to ensure the right to one’s own mind and the right to be free from forced mental health treatment. [3]

CCHR’s co-founder, the late professor of psychiatry and humanitarian Thomas Szasz, M.D., advocated an end to nonconsensual psychiatric treatment. Considered by many scholars and academics to be psychiatry’s most authoritative critic, Dr. Szasz wrote: “Increasing numbers of persons, both in the mental health professions and in public life, have come to acknowledge that involuntary psychiatric interventions are methods of social control. On

both moral and practical grounds, I advocate the abolition of all involuntary psychiatry.” [4]

The Citizens Commission on Human Rights was co-founded in 1969 by members of the Church of Scientology and Dr. Szasz to eradicate abuses and restore human rights and dignity to the field of mental health. CCHR has been instrumental in obtaining hundreds of laws against psychiatric abuse and violations of human rights worldwide.

The CCHR National Affairs Office in Washington, DC, has advocated for mental health rights and protections at the state and federal level. The CCHR traveling exhibit, which has toured major cities worldwide and educated people on the history to the present day of abusive and racist psychiatric practices, has been displayed at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Annual Legislative Conference in Washington, DC, and at other locations.

[1] <https://bmcp psychiatry.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12888-023-04584-4>

[2] <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31162700/>

[3] <https://www.cchr.org/about-us/declaration-of-human-rights/>

[4] <https://www.cchr.org/about-us/co-founder-dr-thomas-szasz/quotes-on-involuntary-commitment/>



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