



*For immediate release*

## **4<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Women's Mental Health Draws Almost 850 Professionals from 68 Countries**

The International Association for Women's Mental Health, IAWMH, held its 4<sup>th</sup> World Congress in Madrid, Spain on March 16-19, 2011. Building on the success of the three previous congresses held in Berlin (2001), Washington (2004), and Melbourne (2008), this multidisciplinary Congress attracted health professionals, researchers, policy makers, academics, consumers, and caregivers from across the globe. Almost 850 men and women from 68 countries from all continents except Antarctica were represented.

The Congress' innovative program focused on the psychosocial, biological and clinical aspects of women's mental health from individual, family, community, society and global perspectives. Through a series of 17 keynote addresses, 52 symposia/workshops and over 300 posters, the program explored the psychosocial, economic and cultural contexts of women's mental health as well as basic science aspects such as brain differences, hormonal or genetic influences. Clinicians and researchers of many disciplines contributed their knowledge on best practices and innovative developments to improve women's mental health across the lifespan.

Social issues such as women's social roles, their upbringing and education, their relationships privately as well as at work and their careers, the discrimination, violence and abuse they often suffer from, as well as women's life cycle including childhood, adolescence, peripartum, menopause and aging – vital topics to understanding women's mental health were examined from interdisciplinary and multicultural perspectives.

The main conclusions of the Congress were simple: women from a biological point of view are different than men, and worldwide they suffer from more discrimination and violence, which are risk factors for mental illness such as depression. Women, however, have a high resilience. Thus, although suffering differently, overall they do not suffer from mental disorders more often than men. Nevertheless, the higher rate of depression has to be taken very seriously as it has a high impact on society by influencing, for instance, health behavior and economic performance of the whole family. Most importantly, it can adversely influence the development of children and therefore of the next generation. Society, therefore, should take great endeavor to reduce discrimination and social disadvantages of women to ensure their mental well-being.

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### **About the International Association for Women's Mental Health**

IAWMH is an international, individual membership, multi-specialty, nonprofit organization. Established in 2001 to improve the mental health of women throughout the world, the **mission** of the International Association for Women's Mental Health is: (1) to improve the mental health of women throughout the world; (2) expand the fund of knowledge about Women's Mental Health; (3) to promote gender-sensitive and autonomy-enhancing mental health services for women; and (4) to advance collaboration between Societies and Sections. [www.iawmh.org](http://www.iawmh.org)

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