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American Psychiatric Association Draws Attention to Mental Illness Awareness Week 2008

ARLINGTON, Va. –Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) is Oct. 5-11, and the American Psychiatric Association (APA) is raising awareness of mental health issues and the importance of eliminating the stigma surrounding them.

Now in its 25th year, Mental Illness Awareness Week provides communities across the country with an opportunity to acknowledge the human and economic toll taken by mental illnesses and to celebrate new treatment advances. Most Americans know someone with a mental illness. Mental illness can be caused by genetic, biological or environmental factors. The APA emphasizes that seeking help is a sign of strength.

The APA believes raising awareness in the communities will help eradicate the stigma surrounding mental illness and aid the mentally ill in living their lives in the best possible way, with the best possible medical treatment.

“Many people are afraid to seek treatment because of the stigma attached to the illness, or they lack adequate health insurance to pay for the care,” said Nada L. Stotland, M.D., M.P.H., APA president. “During Mental Illness Awareness Week, we will try to emphasize mental illnesses are like any other medical illness—they cause pain and disability, they can be diagnosed and they can be treated effectively. As such, health insurance plans should cover them on the same basis as other illnesses.”

Public information, including brochures, free fact sheets on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and panic disorders, depression, and downloadable public service announcements are available through the APA’s Healthy Minds consumer Web site at www.HealthyMinds.org. Information on other public information campaigns that will help bring attention to understanding and treating mental illnesses is also available.

Mental Illness Awareness Week is an annual observance instituted by the APA and the National Alliance on Mental Illness, a patient advocacy organization, to raise public awareness on mental illnesses and the effectiveness of treatment, and to combat mental illness stigma.

About the American Psychiatric Association:

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 38,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.

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