16th Annual Muslim Mental Health Conference: Key Takeaways and Suggested Resources

The [16th Annual Muslim Mental Health Conference](#) was held in March of this year, hosted by the Michigan State University Department of Psychiatry and Stanford University School of Medicine's Muslim Mental Health & Islamic Psychology Lab. CARRE had the pleasure of attending this year's conference virtually, and we are excited to report out on some key takeaways that can help providers build their capacity to support Muslim clients.

Key Takeaways:
Bringing together individuals from over 30 different countries, this year's theme was **"Tech-NO or Tech-YES? The Digital Divide Between Muslims and Their Mental Health,"** exploring "the intersection of technology, mental health and the Muslim community." Main thematic areas of the conference included:

- Islam often plays a critical role in healing for many Muslims. Islamic commitments to faith, empathy, contemplation and community can be successfully integrated into many therapeutic interventions. For example, Quranic verses and Hadith can help explain situations, circumstances or inform parenting practices. Prayer can also be used as a mindfulness practice, or connection to community to encourage behavioral activation and social connection.

- Faith is not monolithic. Islam is composed of a rich, diverse tapestry of traditions to support healing and coping, and people practicing Islam have different ways they view and practice their faith. Some people who identify as Muslim may not consider themselves as religious but may consider themselves a person of faith or have doubts. Where people are in relation to their faith and religious identity may also change over time. Providers, even if they are Muslim, should always be led by the client's voice and choice, and not presume, make assumptions nor pathologize but instead, validate all experiences, perspectives and choices of disclosure.

- Many Muslims are from or have connections to parts of the world that have experienced significant and unjust tragedy and loss in recent years due to crisis, war, conflict and natural and man-made disasters. Even if not directly impacted, many Muslims have a sense of collective loss as they witness the personal loss of other Muslims, the loss of religious and historical landmarks to the Muslim community and the overall homeland. At the same time, communities strive to maintain identities through remembrance and honor collective memories to preserve cultural heritage, which can be a considerable aspect of healing and coping for many.

- Technology is creating many opportunities for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support provision within Muslim communities, including more ways for people to find Muslim or linguistically-matched providers via telehealth, access and share relevant resources, and connect with community. Technology can also open opportunities for

more violence for Muslim communities including contributing to the loneliness epidemic and enhancing prejudices and identity persecution including Islamophobia.

- Muslim Mental Health services continue to have significant gaps such as a lack of data, culturally appropriate care and limited resources, with a need for professional development of Muslim colleagues and partners to grow in the Mental Health field and adaptation for specific contexts and cultures including integrating indigenous contemplative practices and faith-based, secular and culturally based healing practices in the provision of care. Providers with lived experience, the "wounded healers" amongst us may also continue to deal with unresolved support, facing moral distress, survivors' guilt and burnout amidst ongoing catastrophes.

As we continue to walk alongside Muslim clients in meaningful ways, below are some **Faith-Based Tools & Resources** that can help providers in supporting Muslim Clients:

- 988– National Suicide Prevention Lifeline PSA from Muslim Leaders. Also available, Naseeha is a 24-hour, 7 days a week Muslim youth mental health helpline

- The Stanford Muslim Mental Health & Islamic Psychology Lab has worked on essential projects and publications relating to Muslim Mental Health and the many contributions of Islam to Psychology, visit their website and publications to learn more

- The work of psychiatrist Dr. Omar Reda including but not limited to the following renowned work:
    o Untangled: Family Bonding in Ramadan
    o Project Untangled
    o Wounded Healer

- Action Alliance, the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) guide titled Hope: A Guide for Faith Leaders to Help Prevent Youth Suicide; Additionally, the HHS Partnership Center have a toolkit Youth Mental Health and Well-being in Faith and Community Settings

- The Meditation app for Muslims, Ruh, includes finding a Muslim therapist, access to faith-based mindfulness exercises and breathing exercises, and much more!

- The Muslim Mental Health Podcast from Project Taqwa tackles taboo topics and stigma such as substance abuse and viewing Mental Health as a sign of "weak faith"

- The film "Breaking Silence" breaks silence around sexual assault in the Muslim Community

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In addition to the tools and resources shared above, be sure to reference the CARRE resource library, which has suggested resources working with families who have been forcibly displaced, including resources on Racial, Ethnic and Religious Trauma that can be found [here](#) and previous CARRE Newsletter article "[Faith Based Healing in Action](#)."