

# Innovative (Women) Leaders in Global Mental Health

written by Kathleen M. Pike, PhD  
September 20, 2019

Earlier this month, Forbes Magazine released its list of [America's 100 Most Innovative Leaders](#). 99 men and 1 woman.

## AMERICA'S MOST INNOVATIVE LEADERS

*Really? Outrageous on so many levels, even after Forbes provided its [methodology](#). So much so, that this week's Five on Friday breaks form to share with you 100 women who are on my list of Innovators. Individually and collectively, these women are pioneers who are improving our understanding, prevention, and treatment of mental illness.*

*This list includes individuals with lived experience of mental illness, advocates, non-profit leaders, writers, artists, scientists, academics, and clinicians. It is made up of women whom I know or have interacted with, as well as some whom my colleagues suggested. It is in alphabetical order, rather than ranked. It is not meant to be a comprehensive list, and of course many men are doing fabulous and innovative work in the field. But by highlighting these 100 women, I hope to illustrate that innovation is not owned by one gender—not in mental health, not in business, not anywhere.*

**Melanie Abas.** Melanie is a professor at the London Centre for Global Mental Health. Her groundbreaking research on the social origins of depression in women in Zimbabwe was the first to show a common cross-cultural mechanism for the development of depression through the experience of life events involving humiliation and loss.

**Clare Allen.** Clare is author and creative writing lecturer in the United Kingdom who focuses her work on mental health. She connects her experiences with mental illness to mental health policy through her blog "It's My Life" in the Guardian. This column is recognized as one of the most popular mental health blog series from a major news outlet.

**Evelyn Attia.** Evelyn is Director of the Eating Disorders Research Program at the New York State Psychiatric Institute and Director of the Columbia Center for Eating Disorder. She has thirty years of experience advancing

evidence-based care in eating disorders. She has received the Pfizer/Society for Women's Health Research Faculty Development Award for her work on women's mental health. Her compassion and innovative work have helped save the lives of hundreds of individuals suffering with eating disorders.

**Rosemary Awiti.** Rosemary is the CEO of BasicNeeds, an organization working to improve the lives of people living with mental illness and/or epilepsy across the world, with specific focus on Africa and Asia. She has championed implementation of innovative, culturally-sensitive mental health programs for victims of intimate partner violence across Kenya.

**Susan Azrin.** Susan is Program Chief for Primary Care Research Program at the National Institute of Mental Health. She leads a pioneering study of the effectiveness of team-based coordinated speciality care for first-episode psychosis, for which she received the National Institute of Health Director's Award for Outstanding Service.

**Susan Bailey.** Susan is a British psychiatrist and academic who specializes in children's mental health. She was the former President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and has led pioneering work on adolescent mental health in the UK.

**Sue Baker.** Sue is Global Director of Time to Change, a program to end mental health stigma and discrimination. The Time to Change social movement is a revolutionary effort supported by a team of 60 people, many of whom have lived experience with mental health problems.

**Lisa Feldman Barrett.** Lisa is a professor of psychology at Northeastern University, as well as author of *How Emotions are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain*. Her popular TED talk expands awareness of her revolutionary research on emotion in the brain, which won her the National Institutes of Health Director's Pioneer Award. She is also a 2019 Guggenheim Fellow.

**Anne Becker.** Anne is the Maude and Lillian Presley Professor of Global Health and Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School (HMS). An anthropologist and psychiatrist, Dr. Becker has led a pioneering work demonstrating the relationship between media exposure and eating pathology among the indigenous population of Fiji.

**Urvita Bhatia.** Urvita is a psychologist and epidemiologist, and she is currently a Fellow at Sangath, a community-based mental health program based in Goa, India. She is coordinating a novel project to develop psychosocial treatment for family members affected by addiction in Goa.

**Judith Bass.** Judith is the Director of the Global Mental Health Program at Johns Hopkins University where she works to expand availability of effective mental health treatment globally. Recipient of awards from National Center for Environmental Health and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, she is getting effective treatments to communities in need around the globe.

**Christina Borba.** Christina is the Director of Research in the Department of Psychiatry and the Director of the Global and Local Center for Mental Health Disparities at Boston Medical Center. She is currently leading an innovative research training grant that seeks to understand and respond to the existing 5:1 male-to-female prevalence ratio for schizophrenia in Butajira, Ethiopia.

**Cynthia M. Bulik.** Cindy is a leading researcher who is advancing the world's understanding of the interplay between biology and environment and risk for eating disorders. She is the founding director of the UNC Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders and also professor in the Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics at Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, where she directs the Centre for Eating Disorders Innovation.

**Catherine Carlson.** Cady is an Assistant Professor at the University of Alabama, where she focuses on the intersection of violence and mental health and the implementation of evidence-based interventions in low-resource settings. She has recently received funding to complete original research projects aimed at violence and suicide preventions in Uganda and the Philippines.

**Prabha Chandra.** Prabha is the Head of Department at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences in Bangalore, India. She has brought the field of perinatal psychiatry to the forefront in South Asia by starting the first integrated Mother Baby unit and outpatient perinatal psychiatry service in Bangalore.

**Majda Cheour.** Majda is Head of the Department of Psychiatry in Tunis and President of the National College of Psychiatry in Tunis. She is a leading figure advancing science and national policy in Tunis on childhood sexual abuse, women's mental health and suicide.

**Marylène Cloitre.** Marylène is the Director of the Institute for Trauma and Stress at the NYU Child Study Center. She has led studies to provide empirically based assessment and intervention for children who experienced 9/11 and other traumatic events, significantly contributing to program implementation on child trauma response.

**Pamela Collins.** Pamela is Professor of Global Health and Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Director of the Global Mental Health Program at University of Washington. She served as Director of the Office for Research on Disparities and Global Mental Health and the Office of Rural Mental Health at the National Institute of Mental Health. She is recognized around the world for her thought leadership on health equity, social justice and mental health.

**Iyewande Dipeolu.** Iyewande is a Nigerian doctor and co-founder of Mentally Aware Nigeria, a non-profit that raises awareness on mental health and illnesses and works to connect service users to mental health professionals in Nigeria. Mentally Aware Nigeria has creatively leveraged social media to increase public awareness of mental health.

**Lisa Dixon.** Lisa is Director of the Division of Behavioral Health Services and Policy Research within the Department of Psychiatry and Director of the Center for Practice Innovations at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. As champion of the innovative program, OnTrackNY, a statewide initiative designed to improve outcomes and reduce disability for individuals experiencing their first episode of psychosis, she is changing the face of mental health services for people with serious mental illness.

**Tarun Dua.** Tarun is a medical officer working on the Program for Neurological Diseases and Neuroscience, Management of Mental and Brain Disorders in the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse at the World Health Organization. She leads implementation of the Global Campaign Against Epilepsy worldwide and oversees innovative technical activities concerning neurology within the WHO.

**Cristiane Duarte.** Cristiane is a Professor of Child Psychiatry at Columbia Medical Centre and leader of the Boricua Youth Study, the only multi-national source of information about how mental disorders develop from childhood to young adulthood in a Latino subgroup of Puerto Ricans. Her research is based on innovative population-based studies about the development of mental disorders in children, adolescents and young adults.

**Betty Eastland.** Betty is a mental health advocate and member of Fountain House, an organization that provides community for individuals living with serious mental illness. She assists with management of an art studio and designs and teaches interdisciplinary art classes for Fountain House members, illustrating the unique power of the arts to improve mental wellness through creativity and achievement.

**Anke Ehrhardt.** Anke founded the longest-running center for HIV, the HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioural Studies at Columbia University. Anke is an internationally known researcher in the field of sexual and gender

development of children, adolescents, and adults, and she has changed the landscape of HIV research.

**Nabila El-Bassel.** Nabila is a leading figure in innovation science for the prevention and treatment for HIV/AIDS. Saving lives every day, she is known for her work explicitly targeting couples, enabling them to practice safer sex, reduce HIV, and resolve conflicts without violence.

**Akwaeke Emezi.** Akwaeke is a Nigerian writer and video artist and a 2018 National Book Foundation '5 Under 35' honoree. She is the author of *Freshwater*, a novel centered around mental health that was honored as a New York Times Notable Book.

**Naomi Fineberg.** Naomi is a psychiatrist in the United Kingdom with specialized training in researching and treating obsessive compulsive and related disorders. She is also leading new research to study mental and addiction issues related to problematic Internet usage, an area that has grown exponentially in the past decade.

**Donna Friedman.** [Donna](#) is a licensed professional mental health counselor and the founder of the Friedman Center for Eating Disorders at the Medical University of South Carolina. She was the first individual with lived experience to serve on the Academy for Eating Disorders Board of Directors, shaping the constructive engagement of individuals with lived experience in the field of eating disorders research, policy and practice. She is on the Board of Directors of [Project Heal](#), an organization that supports individuals with eating disorders to access full recovery, and the Columbia Global Mental Health Programs' International Advisory Board and has been a tireless advocate for mental health equity and parity.

**Terry Fulmer.** Terry is the President of The John A. Hartford Foundation, an organization that is dedicated to improving the care of older adults. Aging is a women's issue, as women are disproportionately caregivers of aging family members and alone at the end of their lives. Terry and the John A. Hartford Foundation support innovative projects aimed at improving mental health, caregiving, and serious illness care at the end of life.

**Linda Golding.** Linda is a chaplain at the New York Presbyterian Hospital who focuses on pastoral counseling for individuals in the hospital and their families. She is also an adjunct professor in the Bioethics program at Columbia University, where she teaches pastoral care and ethics. Linda's book [Spiritual Care for Non-Communicative Patients: A Guidebook](#) acts as an important resource for individuals struggling with end of life care for their family members, a time when mental health is of utmost importance.

**Laurie Goldstein.** Laurie is a long-time advocate focused on improving services for individuals with serious mental illness. She founded the Association for the Chronically Mentally Ill in Arizona, which works with other stakeholders to improve care of people with chronic mental illness through cost-effective network enhancements. She and her husband Chuck work closely with Mental Health America of Arizona to advocate for innovative local policy solutions to mental health challenges in Arizona.

**Sara Gorman.** Sara is co-author of the revolutionary book, *Denying to the Grave*, and cofounder of Critica, an online community committed to transforming the role of science in making rational decisions about health and security. Critica is revolutionizing the role of science in making rational health decisions.

**Madelyn Gould.** Maddy directs a research unit on youth suicide within the Division of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. She is the national expert on suicide risk and prevention. Her science has been central to developing media and reporting guidelines to prevent the contagion of suicide among youth as well state- and national-level suicide prevention programs.

**Ruchira Gupta.** Ruchira is a pioneer and activist focused on the abolishment of sex trafficking, particularly in India. Founder of Apne Aap, a nongovernmental organization that addresses women's rights and the eradication of human sex trafficking, she has been honored for her work by nations, governmental leaders, and organizations, including the Clinton Global Citizen Award for Commitment to Leadership in Civil Society.

**Corinna Hackmann.** Corinna is a research clinical psychologist in Norfolk, UK who studies collaborations between physicians and patients to improve mental health outcomes. She led the largest study to incorporate the views of service users across the world in development of the ICD-11, the new global diagnostic classification system for mental health.

**Maria Halphen.** Maria created Australia Meeting for Minds, an organization that facilitates meetings between people living with mental illness, families, and those researching into the brain and disorders of the brain to open meaningful dialogue aimed at decreasing stigma of mental health disorders in Australia. This organization's innovative model was replicated in Switzerland and continues to grow across Australia.

**Joy Harden Bradford.** Joy is a psychologist and the host of Therapy for Black Girls, an online space dedicated to encouraging the mental wellness of black women and girls. She uses innovative methods of podcasts, online platforms, therapist directories, and even merchandise to form a community around promotion of mental health.

**Helle Harnisch.** Helle is a researcher at the Centre of Prevention of Radicalization with the Danish police. Through innovative qualitative, ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, surveys and video in the Acholi region of northern Uganda, Helle's PhD research explored resilience, mobilization and reintegration processes among children and youth associated with armed forces or groups. Her research informs child mental health in humanitarian and conflict settings across the world.

**Patrice Harris.** Patrice is a psychiatrist from Atlanta who is the first African American woman to be elected President of the American Medical Association. She has specific innovative plans to increase mental health parity, improve health equity, and encourage diversity among leaders at the AMA while in office.

**Phillipa Hay.** Phillipa is recognized globally for her work in eating disorders. She is immediate past-President of the Australian Academy for Eating Disorders. She has provided pioneering leadership to the development of eating disorders treatments to reduce the individual, family and community burden and is Founding Editor of The Journal for Eating Disorders.

**Helen Herrman.** Helen is a psychiatrist and public health physician focused on youth, technology and mental health. She is impacting the practice of mental health globally. With multiple national and international honors, she is the second woman and first Australian to serve as President of the World Psychiatric Association.

**Saima Wazed Hossain.** Saima is currently the Chairperson of the Bangladesh National Advisory Committee for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders as well as a Member of the World Health Organization's Expert Advisory Panel on Mental Health. Recently, she was chosen as WHO's Goodwill Ambassador for Autism in the South East Asia Region for her innovative work as a spokesperson for individuals with autism in Bangladesh.

**Angeline Jalonen.** Angeline is the Founder of RafikiHome.org, an organization in Kenya that provides a holistic support program, including mental health support, for vulnerable children in Kenya. She has also led innovative research on adapting culturally sensitive approaches for refugee mental distress.

**Poppy Jaman.** Poppy is CEO of City Mental Health Alliance in the United Kingdom, which aims to improve workplace mental health. She built Mental Health First Aid England from a Department of Health initiative into an independent community interest company with a network of 1800 instructors who have trained 300,000 mental health first aiders.

**Lynne Myfanwy Jones.** Lynne is a child and adolescent psychiatrist, writer, researcher, and relief worker. She has been engaged in assessing mental health needs and establishing and running mental health services in disaster, conflict, and post-conflict settings since 1990 around the world. Based on this work, she developed Migrant Child Storytelling, a website where migrant children can tell their stories through their own drawings,

videos, and writing.

**Lamia Jouini.** Lamia is a rising leader in psychiatry in her home country of Tunisia, where she served as President of the Tunisian Association of Young Psychiatrists and Child Psychiatrists and is now completing research on effectiveness of training for medical students to respond effectively to patients' experiences of discrimination.

**Amy Kennedy.** Amy is Education Director for The Kennedy Forum and provides consultation services that emphasize evidence-based research and programming to facilitate policy change in the areas of education and mental health. Longtime teacher, she draws on her experiences in the public schools to propel advocacy around social-emotional learning and mental wellness for children and adolescents.

**Dévora Kestel.** Dévora is the Director of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse at the World Health Organization. Her over twenty-five years of advocacy and policy work in global mental health has transformed international policies to improve the rights of people with mental health issues.

**Brigitte Khoury.** Brigitte is a Lebanese-born psychologist who researches how to improve the health and mental health care of LGBT citizens in Lebanon. Brigitte is changing the way LGBT people in Lebanon see themselves and how others perceive and treat them in the healthcare system and beyond.

**Joyce Kingori.** Joyce is Country Leader for Basic Needs Kenya, an international organization that supports the health, social, and economic needs of people with mental illnesses and neurological disorders in developing countries. She leads a ground-breaking initiative to increase affordability of mental health care in Kenya by training community volunteers in leading support groups for anxiety and depression.

**Lola Kola.** Lola is a mental health researcher at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. She was recently chosen as a National Institute for Health Emerging Global Leader for her innovative work.

**Kathy Leichter.** Kathy is a filmmaker who works to reduce stigma and raise awareness about mental illness. Her documentary [Here One Day](#) is based on tapes that Kathy found after her mother's suicide that shared her mother's struggle with mental illness. Kathy has used her film as an advocacy tool to start important conversations about mental health and suicide prevention at viewings across the United States.

**Shari Ling.** Shari is a geriatrician and rheumatologist and Deputy Chief Medical Officer at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Her long-standing focus is on the achievement of meaningful health outcomes through delivery of high-quality beneficiary-centered care across all care settings, with a special interest in the care of persons with multiple chronic conditions and reducing health disparities.

**Elisha London.** Elisha is founding CEO of United for Global Mental Health, an organization committed to ensuring that everyone, everywhere has someone to turn to in support of their mental health. She has also served as advisor to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and led the groundbreaking advocacy campaign Heads Together.

**Sandra Luckow.** Sandra is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and National Endowment for the Arts Artist in Residence 2019 at Columbia University. Her film, "That Way Madness Lies..." tells of her family's torturous journey through the broken U.S. mental health system - a system that became familiar as they navigated the journey with Sandra's brother who has schizophrenia.

**Miia Mannikko.** Miia is the President of EUFAMI, an organization in Finland created to support individuals with severe mental illness and their caregivers across Europe. EUFAMI is completing original Europe-wide surveys on caregiving challenges for individuals with serious mental illness.

**Marsha Marcus.** Marsha has been at the forefront of advancing research and treatment for eating disorders and obesity. She is on faculty at the University of Pittsburgh where she directed training and research programs that produced groundbreaking work. She has received numerous awards, including Outstanding Clinical Educator Award from the Society of Clinical Psychology and the Academy for Eating Disorders Leadership Award.

**Hazel Markus.** Hazel is a Professor of Psychology at Stanford University. Her research focuses on the role of self in regulating behavior and on the ways in which the social world and cultures shape the self. She has received the American Psychological Association's award for Distinguished Scientific Contribution.

**Joan Marsh.** Joan is the Deputy Editor of *The Lancet Psychiatry*, one of the preeminent psychiatry journals in the world. This journal focuses specifically on sharing innovative treatment and biological research underpinnings to mental illness through increased publications in the mental health field and broadens research by including new ways of thinking about mental illness promoted by social psychiatry.

**Silvia Martins.** Silvia Martins is the Unit leader of the Substance Abuse Epidemiology Unit of the Department of Epidemiology, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. She is a globally recognized leader on substance abuse, having conducted transformative research on marijuana and heroin use in the US.

**Elinore McKance-Katz.** Elinore is the first Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use within the US Department of Health and Human Services. She is passionate about improving care for individuals with serious mental illness and is a national leader in addressing the overprescribing of opioids.

**María Elena Medina-Mora.** María Elena served as the General Director of the National Institute of Psychiatry Ramón de la Fuente in Mexico for the past decade. She has pioneered research on methodological, psychosocial, and epidemiological issues as they relate to addictions and mental health. She has received numerous awards for her work, including the Award of Excellence in International Leadership from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

**Claude Mellins.** Claude is Co-Director for the HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies at New York State Psychiatric Institute. For over the past 25 years she has led programs that examine neurodevelopment, mental health, and sexual and drug risk behavior in vulnerable populations of children, adolescents, and young adults, particularly those affected by HIV, poverty and substance abuse.

**Claire (Vickery) Middleton.** Claire founded the Butterfly Foundation in 2002 to improve the accessibility and quality of eating disorder services in Australia. The Foundation has been part of leading transformative change to the culture, policy and practice in the prevention, treatment and support of those affected by eating disorders and negative body image.

**Catherine Monk.** Catherine directs the Perinatal Pathways lab at Columbia University Medical Center, where she and her colleagues conduct world-renowned research with pregnant women and their babies to improve their well-being and their future children's lives. Her team has significantly contributed to the body of scientific evidence about the emerging connections of trauma, anxiety, and depression across generations.

**Janet Montag.** Janet founded the International Advisory Board of the Columbia University Global Mental Health Programs and serves as Chair of this leadership committee comprised of a cross-section of female international advocates for global mental health. Janet is a champion of women's education and wellbeing, and every member of the International Advisory Board is part of a pioneering and innovative community of women who are making it possible to improve access to evidence-based mental health treatment across the world

**Christine Musyimi.** Christine is the head of Research Ethics and Scientific Publications department at Africa Mental Health Foundation, a research foundation that works to increase access to mental health services in

Nairobi, Kenya. One of Christine's projects includes using innovative technology-based interventions to deliver better community mental health care for depression.

**Yvonne Ochieng.** Yvonne is a rising leader involved in youth engagement and development for mental health, most prominently as Program Manager at the community-based organization N'zumari Africa and Youth Program Coordinator for citiesRISE in Nairobi, Kenya. She leads innovative youth-centered research, training, and programs, with a focus on mental health and human rights.

**Christine Ogaranko.** Christine leads a portfolio of work on migration and mental health at the Open Society Foundations. She is one of the lead researchers on mental health and disability studies in Ukraine and Russia.

**Olayinka Omigbodun.** Olayinka is the founder and director of the University of Ibadan in Nigeria's Centre for Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CCAMH). Under her direction, CCAMH is one of the first regional multidisciplinary training centers for mental health in sub-Saharan Africa, training over 100 students from 13 countries.

**Manuela Orjuela-Grimm.** Manuela is an epidemiologist and pediatric oncologist who studies dietary intake in Mexico and in recent Mexican immigrants. She was recently chosen to lead a new study using innovative psychosocial interventions to support Mexican immigrants in the United States.

**Maria A. Oquendo.** Maria is the Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at University of Pennsylvania's Medical School and former President of American Psychiatry Association. She is one of seven female chairs of psychiatry in the United States and has been a pioneer for women in leadership in academia and the sciences.

**Ramachandran Padmavati.** Padmavati is Director of the Schizophrenia Research Foundation in India. She has been a pioneering leader advancing community mental health programming and eliminating discrimination and prejudice of mental illness across rural south India.

**Ranna Parekh.** Ranna is a psychiatrist at the American Psychiatric Foundation. Author of *Overcome Prejudice at Work*, she is a widely acclaimed champion for women in medicine.

**Laura Ospina Pinillos.** Laura is a Colombian psychiatrist with a special interest in child, adolescent, and family psychiatry. She is a pioneer of the adaptation of mental health e-tools into Spanish, and is leading efforts to develop effective technologies to advance mental health in Colombia.

**Mariana Pinto da Costa.** Mariana is a Portuguese psychiatrist who is a research fellow at Queen Mary University in London. She is leading innovative research on social relationships between people with psychosis and volunteers using face-to-face meetings and digital technology to assess the potential of technology to support individuals with psychosis across three European countries.

**Katherine Ponte.** Katherine is a mental health entrepreneur, advocate, writer, and lawyer dedicated to promoting mental illness recovery and wellness. She is living in recovery from severe bipolar I disorder with psychosis. She is the founder of [ForLikeMinds](#), an organization that connects individuals with lived experience of mental illness and those supporting someone with mental illness to form support peer groups. Katherine is also a Lecturer in Psychiatry of the [Program for Recovery and Community Health](#), Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, Yale University. Katherine is an exemplary model of the power of individuals with lived experience of mental illness to raise awareness and create businesses aimed at supporting mental health.

**Tia Powell.** Tia is the author of the bestselling book, *Dementia Reimagined: Building a Life of Joy and Dignity from Beginning to End*, and professor of psychiatry and bioethics at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York. She is one of the nation's champions for calling for more research on developing compassionate care models for individuals living with dementia.

**Thara Rangaswamy.** Thara is a psychiatrist and co-founder and director of a non-profit organization in Chennai, India called the Schizophrenia Research Foundation. She has been responsible for influencing policy related to mental disability in India and pioneered the use of mobile tele-psychiatry in rural south India.

**Judith Rodin.** Judith is a psychologist whose pioneering work shaped the study of obesity and eating disorders, Judith was also my dissertation advisor. She was President of University of Pennsylvania and President of The Rockefeller Foundation. She is a pioneer, innovator, change-maker and global thought-leader in education, behavioral health and strategic philanthropy.

**Graciela Rojas.** Graciela is Director of the Clinical Hospital and Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Chile. She is a leading researcher in pre-natal and post-partum depression among women in Chile.

**Delaney Ruston.** [Delaney](#) is a filmmaker and a physician, splitting her time between providing primary care and creating documentaries. Two of her films feature mental health, including [Unlisted: A Story of Schizophrenia](#) about her father and [Hidden Pictures](#) about global mental health. Her work has been used for global advocacy campaigns promoting mental health awareness.

**Alexandra Saks.** Alexandra is a reproductive psychiatrist who is a leading expert in “matrescence,” a concept that she popularized in her TED talk with over 1.7 million views worldwide, and in her New York Times article The Birth of a Mother, the number one most read piece of 2017 for the “Well Family” section, where she is regular contributor. She is also host of the podcast Motherhood Sessions, providing easy-to-access mental health awareness and resources for pregnant women and new mothers.

**Elyn Saks.** Elyn is Orrin B. Evans Professor of Law, Psychology, and Psychiatry and the Behavioral Sciences at University of Southern California Gould School of Law. She is also author of the memoir The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey Through Madness, which vividly describes her journey with schizophrenia. Elyn’s inspiring personal story and extensive research on the ethical dimensions of psychiatric research have transformed the field of mental health.

**Karlee Silver.** Karlee is the Co-CEO of Grand Challenges Canada, a major grant funder for development and humanitarian innovation initiatives. She advises specifically on the development of innovative initiatives aligned with global mental health and women’s and children’s health and development.

**Helen Blair Simpson.** Blair is a pioneering psychiatrist and vice chair for research in the Department of Psychiatry at Columbia University who is committed to pioneering treatments for people with obsessive-compulsive disorder and related disorders so that these people can live productive lives. Her work ranges from treatment development to brain imaging and animal studies in collaboration with basic scientists help us better understand the brain mechanisms of OCD.

**Moitreyee Sinha.** Moitreyee is Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of citiesRISE, a global organization that brings together international and national leaders in mental health to change the way 21st century cities can better promote mental health and treat mental illness. She previously led the GE Foundation’s Global Health portfolio in 22 countries, and she brings a unique vision for collective, community-based action to mental health.

**Mona Sinha.** Mona is Board Chair of Women Moving Millions, which leverages millions of dollars of philanthropy by women towards women and girls. She invests in the leadership of women to influence and accelerate progress toward a gender equal world. Mona was recently profiled for her work with Women Moving Millions by the Wall Street Journal.

**Virginia Smith-Swintosky.** Ginger is the Mental Health Global Program Leader in Johnson & Johnson’s Global Public Health Department. She represents the power of the private sector in mental health programming

worldwide, as she leads a matrix team accountable for defining and recommending an overarching strategy and aspiration for a global interventional program in mental health in resource limited settings addressable by J&J products, capabilities, and technologies.

**Barbara Stanley.** Barbara is Professor of Medical Psychology (in Psychiatry) at Columbia University. She has devoted her career to the treatment of individuals with suicidal behavior, self-injury, borderline personality disorder (BPD), and emotion regulation difficulties. She is recognized around the globe as a leader in the field and has been a pioneer in developing assessments and interventions to reduce the risk and rates of suicide globally.

**Charlene Sunkel.** Charlene is a South African mental health activist and author with lived experience with schizophrenia. She is the Principal Coordinator of the Movement for Global Mental Health, an innovative platform connecting individuals and organizations that work on mental health across the world, and CEO of Global Mental Health Peer Network, which is working to establish networks of individuals with lived experience of mental illness in 21 countries to inform global discussions and policy.

**Peggy Swarbrick.** Peggy is Director of Practice Innovation and Wellness at Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care and she coordinates activities for the Wellness Institute of the Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey. Peggy has been a leader in promoting a wellness approach to addressing serious mental illness and her work has been central to the SAMHSA strategies promoting wellness for better behavioral health outcomes.

**Annika Sweetland.** Annika is a professor at Columbia University pioneering work that is transforming what we know about tuberculosis and depression. She is Co-Chair of the TB & Mental Health Working Group for the International Union Against TB & Lung Disease, and her work focused on depression among individuals with TB is improving the quality of life for individuals all over the world.

**Katherine Switz.** Katherine is Executive Director of The Stability Network, a growing movement of people living and working with mental health conditions. She uses her lived experience of bipolar disorder, suicidal depression, anxiety and OCD to share stories and change lives in over 80 cities on the frontlines of mental health.

**Shelley E. Taylor.** Shelley is a Professor Emeritus at the UCLA College of Life Sciences and Psychology. Her pioneering work is at the foundation of health psychology today. Her work on socio-emotional resources, including optimism, mastery, self-esteem, and social support, are foundational to our understanding of the ways in which these factors shape our experience of threatening events.

**Alok Vaid-Menon.** Alok is a gender non-conforming writer and performance artist. They are internationally renowned for their poetic challenge to the gender binary, presenting their work at 500 venues in more than 40 countries. They have written about the importance of mental health to acceptance of identity and purpose in life.

**Barbara Van Dahlen.** Barbara is a licensed clinical psychologist who is also the founder and former president of [Give an Hour](#), an organization that enlists mental health providers to donate time to provide free services to US troops, veterans, their loved ones, and their communities. She was named to TIME Magazine's [2012 list](#) of the 100 most influential people in the world.

**Yasmine Van Wilt.** Yasmine is an artist, singer/songwriter and neuroscientist who employs the arts to expand awareness about mental health. National Endowment for the Arts Artist in Resident 2019 at Columbia University, she produced the award winning song with Daphne Willis "I Am Enough" in partnership with Sony/ATV Records.

**Lena Verdelli.** Lena is the director of the Global Mental Health Lab at Teachers College at Columbia University

and focuses on treatment of mental health conditions in under-resourced communities around the world. Lena's has implemented interpersonal therapy in settings across the world, including Lebanon, Haiti, Malawi, and Abu Dhabi.

**Sitawa Wafula.** Sitawa Wafula is a blogger and advocate who uses her personal journey as a rape survivor living with a dual diagnosis of epilepsy and bipolar disorder to bring mental health conversations to the forefront in Africa. She is best known for running My Mind My Funk, a social enterprise that set up Kenya's first free mental health support line and an Academy that develops the next generation of mental health champions in Africa. Sitawa is also an Aspen New Voices Fellow with the Aspen Institute, U.S.A and a Non Communicable Disease Champion under the Ministry of Health in her home country, Kenya.

**Danuta Wasserman.** Danuta is a professor in psychiatry and suicidology at Karolinska Institute and Director and Founding Head of the National Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention of Mental Ill-Health in Sweden. She assists in the development of suicide preventive research on five continents and leads the burgeoning field of research on the epidemiology and genetic basis of suicidal behaviors.

**Ruth Streigel Weissman.** Ruth is Editor in Chief of the International Journal for Eating Disorders, professor emeritus and former Provost at Wesleyan University. Having conducted pioneering work identifying risk factors for eating disorders and documenting the health care benefits associated with improved health coverage for these serious illnesses, Ruth has been recognized with many awards, including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Academy for Eating Disorders and the American Psychological Association award for mentoring.

**Myrna Weissman.** Myrna is the Diane Goldman Kemper Family Professor of Epidemiology in Psychiatry at the Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons and Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, and Chief of the Division of Translational Epidemiology at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. Over the course of her career, Myrna has conducted seminal work on the prevalence of psychiatric disorders, particularly anxiety and mood disorders across generations. She has studied the clinical course of illness in individuals at high risk for depression and the biological and social mechanism which put them at risk. She also developed interpersonal psychotherapy with Gerald Klerman, a short-term treatment for depression that now has over 130 clinical trial with numerous adaptations and translations disseminated around the world. The recipient of numerous awards, she is a member of the National Academy of Medicine. Myrna's innovation and leadership have transformed what we know about the epidemiology of depression and the interventions that treat depression and interrupt its transmission across generations.

**Denise Wilfley.** Denise has devoted her career to understanding the causes of eating disorders and obesity among children, adolescents and adults and then developing prevention and treatment interventions that work. She is passionate about disseminating innovative and cost-effective methods for early intervention and prevention of eating disorders and obesity, and her pioneering work has made her a global leader working at the intersection of eating disorders and obesity.

**Glenda Wrenn-Gordon.** Glenda is Chief Medical Officer at 180 Health Partners, providing multi-modal care coordination between opioid addicted mothers and healthcare providers. She is a public speaker, health policy researcher and mental health advocate who is passionate about creating a society where all people have the opportunity to overcome adversity and create a good life for themselves. She was formerly Director at Kennedy-Satcher Center for Mental Health Equity in the Morehouse School of Medicine.

**Sahle-Work Zewde.** Sahle-Work is the first female president of Ethiopia. She was also previously the first woman to head the UN Office to the African Union. She is passionate about promoting gender equality, women's mental health and wellness and is committed to bringing new mentoring the next generation of girls.

*This list is not exhaustive by any means, and I imagine every reader could nominate other innovative women leaders in mental health. But in the face of Forbes' egregiously lopsided list, let's remember that no segment of society has a monopoly on innovation. Recognizing innovation that comes from all sections of society simply requires opening our eyes and looking for it.*

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*\*\*Update 10/11/2019: Since this blog was posted, many more innovative women have been nominated for this list by recipients of the Five on Friday newsletter. We have included these additional women in this list, and it now expands beyond 100 women. We will continue to periodically add innovative women in global mental health based on nomination.*