**New Incentive Challenge Offers Prize for Ideas to**

**Increase Awareness and Utilization of Mental Health Services**

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Partners seek ideas to increase the demand and utilization of community-based and comprehensive mental health services for depression and anxiety in low-resource settings.

**NEW YORK, September 10, 2013**—Scientists Without Borders, in collaboration with Johnson & Johnson, today announced a $10,000 open innovation Challenge seeking ideas to increase awareness and utilization of mental health services for depression and anxiety disorders among patients in the developing world. The Challenge will run for 31 days, concluding on Global Mental Health Day, October 10, 2013.

Mental disorders pose severe public health consequences in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs), where nearly three quarters of global cases occur. In LMICs and other low-resource settings, mental disorders are exacerbated by a number of challenges. These include lack of awareness and education, as well as stigma from both the community and individuals.

Moreover, there is a profound lack of global investment in mental health care. Although mental disorders contribute more to the global burden of noncommunicable disease than cardiovascular disease or cancer,[[1]](#footnote-1) the vast majority of countries allocate less than 2% of their health budgets to mental health.[[2]](#footnote-2) Among mental health disorders, unipolar depression[[3]](#footnote-3) is one of the most common and debilitating, affecting an estimated 5% of the population or 350 million people worldwide. Anxiety disorders are diagnosed in nearly half of all clinical depression cases.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Despite efforts on the part of governments, healthcare advocates, and policy makers, a persistent lack of awareness and demand among patients and families for adequate mental health services and the underutilization of the services that do exist continue at both the state and local level.

This Challenge, therefore, specifically seeks bold and innovative ideas that have the potential to significantly increase the utilization of available evidence-based services for diagnosis and treatment among individuals aged 15-44 with depression and anxiety disorders. Ideas should be culturally appropriate and feasible to implement in low-resource settings.

“We are thrilled to be partnering with Johnson & Johnson and InnoCentive to apply our collaborative open innovation model seeking solutions to increase awareness and utilization of mental health services for the diagnosis and treatment of depression and anxiety disorders in LMICs." says Chenelle Bonavito, Program Associate at Scientists Without Borders.

“There is enormous need to help people in developing regions of the world who suffer from mental illness,” said Husseini K. Manji, MD, Global Head, Neuroscience Therapeutic Area, Janssen Research & Development, LLC, a Johnson & Johnson company. “We are privileged to be able to support this effort to engage diverse global problem solvers to find new ways to help educate people and enable them to seek care for mental illness and to have hope for effective treatment.”

The involvement of Johnson & Johnson in this project is related to the company’s Healthy Minds Initiative, launched in 2011 by the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies, which strives to accelerate progress in the fight against brain disorders—through basic discovery, clinical translation, and multi-sector collaboration—and to help educate people about brain disorders and reduce the stigma that is associated with them.

“There are both demand and supply side barriers to improving access to mental health care in all countries. Although there has been some progress on improving the supply of mental health care, little action has been taken on addressing demand. It would be fair to say that we don’t even have a full understanding of these barriers, let alone how to address them. This Challenge is very timely indeed, and I look forward to some truly innovative ideas on addressing barriers to demand for and utilization of mental health care for depression in low-resource settings.” Says Dr. Vikram Patel, a judge on the Challenge’s panel, and a professor of International Mental Health and Wellcome Trust Senior Research Fellow in Clinical Science; Centre for Global Mental Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; Sangath, Goa, India Centre for Mental Health, Public Health Foundation of India

“We are delighted to be a part of this important initiative and working with such esteemed partners.” said Alpheus Bingham, PhD, Founder and Board member of InnoCentive, “Our solvers from all over the world, like any of us, have experienced first hand, or on behalf of family and friends, the challenges of effective access and delivery systems for mental well-being. We look forward to the diversity of thought and approaches this exercise will bring.”

Solvers are invited to submit their ideas via [InnoCentive](http://bit.ly/13AYqHv), which is administering the online portion of the Challenge. An independent panel of leading experts convened by Scientists Without Borders will select the Challenge winners. Winners will be announced six weeks following the conclusion of the Challenge.

In keeping with the partners’ commitment to encourage the open advancement of great ideas, the winning solution will be posted and made publicly available on the Scientists Without Borders website to encourage further uptake and innovation.

To view the Challenge and learn more, please visit: [**www.scientistswithoutborders.org**](http://www.scientistswithoutborders.org)

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**About Scientists Without Borders**

Scientists Without Borders, a program of the New York Academy of Sciences, is a web-based collaborative community that generates and advances innovative and effective science and technology-based solutions to global development challenges. Scientists Without Borders's unique model leverages a free online platform to connect a worldwide group of cross-disciplinary, multi-sector users to develop and openly share concrete and effective solutions to these challenges. To learn more about Scientists Without Borders, visit [www.scientistswithoutborders.org](https://ams.nyas.org/nyasssa/ecmssamsganalytics.click_through?p_mail_id=E128204A3722477B1C25101)

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The New York Academy of Sciences is an independent, not-for-profit organization that since 1817 has been committed to advancing science, technology, and society worldwide. With 25,000 members in 140 countries, the Academy is creating a global community of science for the benefit of humanity. The Academy's core mission is to advance scientific knowledge, positively impact the major global challenges of society with science-based solutions, and increase the number of scientifically informed individuals in society at large. Please visit us online at [www.nyas.org](https://ams.nyas.org/nyasssa/ecmssamsganalytics.click_through?p_mail_id=E128204A3722477B1C25107).

**About InnoCentive**

InnoCentive is the global leader in crowdsourcing innovation problems to the world's smartest people who compete to provide ideas and solutions to important business, social, policy, scientific, and technical Challenges. For more than a decade, leading commercial, government, and nonprofit organizations have partnered with InnoCentive to rapidly generate innovative new ideas and solve pressing problems. For more information, visit <http://www.innocentive.com/>

1. The Global Burden of Disease: 2004 Update. World Health Organization. (WHO 2008) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. MENTAL HEALTH GAP ACTION PROGRAMME (mhGAP),”Special Focus on the draft Global Mental Health Action Plan” <http://www.who.int/mental_health/mhgap/mhGAP_forum_2012.pdf>, World Health Organization. (WHO 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Unipolar depression is a mood disorder in which overwhelming feelings of sadness, loss, anger, or frustration interfere with everyday life (including personal relationships, professional or educational routines, sleep, hygiene, and dietary patterns) for two weeks or longer. For the purposes of this Challenge, the term “depression” refers to unipolar depression. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Barbee, J. G. (1998). Mixed symptoms and syndromes of anxiety and depression: Diagnostic, prognostic, and etiologic issues. Annals of Clinical Psychiatry, 10:15–29. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)