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EPA GUIDANCE ON PREVENTION OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH

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Prevention of mental illness and promotion of mental health are a significant component of any clinician's clinical work load. However, often this aspect is omitted from training and service delivery due to insufficient resources and the sheer volume of clinical load. Considerable evidence confirms that prevention can significantly reduce the onset of and subsequent related burdens to mental illness, and associated personal, social and economic costs. Often prevention and promotion get confused, and further mental illness and mental health are related but distinct dimensions. Acute mental illness usually prevents positive mental health or wellbeing, yet similarly someone without mental illness can have poor mental health and poor well being. Prevention of mental illness relates closely to and can result from promotion of mental health and associated resilience.

Prevention can be categorised in multiple ways and most clinicians regularly utilise secondary and tertiary prevention. Primary prevention addresses wider determinants across whole populations. Selective prevention targets groups at higher risk of developing disorder. Secondary prevention involves early detection and intervention and corresponds to indicated prevention. This lecture summarises these challenges and the impact of mental illness, and develops the case for prevention. The risk and protective factors for mental illness and various ages of onset are presented. Interventions at different life stages are also outlined. The lecture relies on the EPA Guidance on prevention of mental ill health and promotion of mental well being using the development of UK policy as structure. Future steps will be presented within European and global context.