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## Editorial

## Preface

Suicide and mental illness is a major burden in most nations worldwide, and a major public health concern. According to WHO estimates, based on reporting from 130 countries, around one million people commit suicide each year and 10–20 times more attempt suicide. Throughout the world, suicide is one of the leading causes of death among adolescents and young adults.

In the WHO European region, approximately 163,000 people commit suicide yearly, with about 63,000 suicides in 27 European Union countries alone. The causes of mental disorders and suicide are complex and involve both genetic and environmental (psychological and social stress) factors. However, in preventive interventions and other types of public health work carried out thus far, biological factors such as the individual's neurogenetic status are rarely, if ever, considered.

To facilitate a more advanced framework in future public health efforts, the 2009 Nobel Conference on “*The Role of Genetics in Promoting Suicide Prevention and the Mental Health of the Population*” was held at the Nobel Forum at Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden on 8th–10th June 2009. The conference was sponsored by the Nobel Assembly at Karolinska Institute, awarding the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine, and organized by the National Swedish Prevention of Suicide and Mental Ill-Health (NASP) together with the Center for Molecular Medicine, both at Karolinska Institutet (KI).

The conference brought together an audience and invited presenters with cross-sectional backgrounds, ranging from public health staff, clinicians, epidemiologists to basic scientists in neurobiology and genetics, all interested in the common denominator of the role of a biological perspective in a variety of psychiatric conditions associated with suicide. The impressions

summarized during the conference give us a glimpse of the future, in which a cross-sectional approach integrated in psychiatry achieves more specific and effective means of preventing mental ill-health at the level of the individual and entire populations.

Published in this issue of *European Psychiatry* are the presentations held during these three days, focusing on the genetic basis of mood/psychotic disorders and substance abuse, in relation to attempted and completed suicide, with topics ranging from molecular-cellular mechanisms to (endo)phenotypes of mental disorders at the level of the individual and populations.

Stockholm, June 8–10, 2009.

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