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QUARTERLY

# NEWSLETTER



Institute for Research & Development  
in Health & Social Care



# TRANSLATE

TRANSLATING EVIDENCE FOR EARLY INTERVENTION  
IN PSYCHOSIS IN LMICs:  
IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

TRANSLATE is an NIHR-funded initiative aimed at establishing and evaluating early intervention in psychosis (EIP) services in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The project assesses engagement and remission in First episode psychosis (FEP) and explores clinical markers linked to Treatment-resistant schizophrenia (TRS).

Additionally, the study will develop a clinical tool for early TRS risk prediction, tailored for use in low- and Lower-middle-income countries.

## PSYCHOSIS AWARENESS RAISED AT MAJOR SPIRITUAL GATHERING IN PESHAWAR - 4/5 JANUARY, 2026

The TRANSLATE Project successfully delivered a two-day psychosis awareness initiative at a large spiritual gathering (URS) held on 4–5 January 2026 at Peshawar Muraqba Hall. The event, attended by approximately 3,000 participants, brought together spiritual and traditional healers from across the region. This initiative aimed at TSH to act early to refer any suspected psychosis patient to mental health clinics/services within the KP province.

The awareness activity aimed to improve understanding of psychosis, promote early identification of symptoms, and strengthen collaboration between mental health services and spiritual healing communities. Two dedicated awareness stalls—one for men and one for women—were set up during the gathering, where newly developed psychosis awareness manuals for spiritual healers were launched and widely distributed.

Educational videos addressing early symptoms, common myths, and the importance of timely medical care were shown continuously, alongside interactive discussions and question-and-answer sessions. The initiative received strong engagement, with participants demonstrating high levels of interest and openness to dialogue around mental health.

The activity was facilitated by the TRANSLATE project team, with effective gender-sensitive engagement ensuring cultural appropriateness. Organisers concluded that the initiative highlighted the potential for sustainable collaboration between spiritual healers and mental health services, demonstrating the feasibility of integrating mental health awareness into large community and faith-based gatherings



## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSION WITH TRADITIONAL & SPIRITUAL HEALERS (TSHS) TRANSLATE RESEARCH PROJECT – 10 JANUARY 2026**

A Community Engagement Session was conducted with Traditional and Spiritual Healers (TSHs) under the TRANSLATE Research Project (Transforming Research and Advocacy for Novel Strategies in Early Psychosis). The activity aimed to strengthen collaboration between TSHs and formal mental health services, promote early identification of psychosis, and reduce stigma within community-based healing systems. The session brought together 30 TSHs, Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) from Basic Health Units (BHUs), mental health faculty, and several distinguished guests including university vice chancellors and senior clinicians.

The Project Manager introduced the objectives of TRANSLATE, followed by an overview of the project's model and the importance of community engagement delivered by the Project Lead. A detailed presentation on psychosis – signs, symptoms, impact, and early recognition – was delivered by the Clinical Lead. Participants actively shared reflections and acknowledged the value of integrating traditional healing with scientific mental health care. Awareness materials, including psychosis leaflets and TSH-specific guidelines, were distributed.



### **COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD (CAB) MEETING – PESHAWAR (15 JANUARY 2026)**

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) meeting convened at Khyber Medical University (KMU), beginning with introductions and an outline of the session's objectives by the Project Manager. CAB members included spiritual healers, educators, service users, carers, and youth representatives, creating a broad platform for diverse input. Key project updates were presented, including the revision of age eligibility from 18 to 16 years, which CAB members supported while stressing youth safety, ethical considerations, and community acceptance. They also discussed relocation of a project site from Hyderabad to Karachi, highlighting the need for context-specific engagement strategies for larger urban populations.

The project team shared updates on awareness activities with Traditional and Spiritual Healers (TSHs), Primary Care Physicians (PCPs), and public events. CAB members emphasized urgent awareness regarding drug-induced psychosis, especially among youth unaware of adulterated substances. Review of awareness materials led to recommendations for clearer language, more realistic imagery, and stronger emphasis on self-care. The CAB further advised initiating awareness sessions in educational institutions and proposed selecting voluntary community champions to support referrals and community education. Transport challenges for individuals in acute mental health episodes were highlighted, with the suggestion to explore dedicated transport links. Images from the meeting were included in the original report



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & INVOLVEMENT (CEI) SESSION WITH THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY TRANSLATE RESEARCH STUDY – 07 FEBRUARY 2026

As part of its commitment to inclusive outreach, the TRANSLATE research team conducted a Community Engagement and Involvement (CEI) session with the transgender community—one of the most marginalized and underserved groups in mental health access. Due to historical mistrust, engagement required culturally sensitive steps beginning with liaison through the Guru, the community’s central leader. Multiple meetings were held to build rapport, address concerns of stigma, exploitation, and confidentiality, and clarify the study’s supportive, non-judgmental purpose. With trust established, the Guru invited the team to conduct the session at the community’s Dera, ensuring a safe and familiar environment. The session, attended by 30 transgender individuals, focused on mental health literacy, myths about mental illness, and recognition of psychosis and schizophrenia. During discussions, 5–6 individuals were identified as showing symptoms of psychosis, and—with consent—were referred to Khyber Medical University (KMU) for further assessment using formal referral cards. Awareness materials were distributed, and the activity highlighted essential lessons in trust-building, leadership engagement, and tailored outreach to vulnerable populations. Images from the activity were included in the original file



## TRAINING ON ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF CARE COORDINATORS – ONLINE (03 MARCH 2026)

Under the TRANSLATE Research Project, an online training session was held to strengthen the capacity of site teams regarding the role of Care Coordinators (CCs) in Early Intervention in Psychosis (EIP) services. Facilitated by the Site Coordinator (KMU) under the supervision of the Project Lead, the session brought together project teams from Karachi, Abbottabad, Faisalabad, Quetta, and Peshawar. The facilitator introduced the framework of care coordination, explaining the multidisciplinary team structure comprising Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Research Assistants (RAs), and Site Leads.

Core responsibilities of CCs were reviewed, including serving as the primary point of contact for patients and caregivers, supporting treatment adherence, maintaining regular follow-up (1, 3, 6 and 12 months), and addressing barriers such as stigma, transport, and socio-economic constraints. The session also outlined standard communication protocols, emphasizing timely reminders, documentation via Electronic Health Records (EHRs), Open Data Kit (ODK) assessments, and site-level Care Coordination Logs. Ethical standards—confidentiality, informed consent, cultural sensitivity—were reinforced. Participants engaged in discussion and clarification of practical challenges.

## TRANSLATE FOCAL PERSONS MEETING – MINUTES ONLINE MEETING – 04 MARCH 2026

An online coordination meeting was held with TRANSLATE focal persons to review project progress and operational updates. All study sites reported active patient screening and recruitment, although patient flow was temporarily reduced due to Ramadan. The Karachi site showed strong recruitment performance. Medicines nearing expiry were recalled for replacement, and all study forms were confirmed as updated and functioning correctly on the ODK (Open Data Kit) system. No logistical requirements were reported from any site.

A monitoring visit to the Faisalabad site was scheduled for 9 March 2026 to support ongoing research and service delivery activities.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT (CEI) – SITE MONITORING VISIT, FAISALABAD - 7 MARCH, 2026

A site monitoring visit was conducted at the Faisalabad study site under the TRANSLATE Research Project (Transforming Research and Advocacy for Novel Strategies in Early Psychosis) on 7 March 2026. The Khyber Medical University (KMU) research team and external monitors reviewed study procedures, data quality, and protocol adherence. The session began with a joint meeting led by the Site Lead and the National Lead, during which teams reviewed recruitment progress, discussed facilitators and barriers, and acknowledged Faisalabad as the highest-recruiting site in the project. Monitoring activities included assessments of patient flow, assessment procedures, record keeping, protocol compliance and Open Data Kit (ODK) and electronic data entry processes. The site demonstrated strong performance, with high-quality documentation and effective coordination with the KMU team. The visit strengthened collaboration and reinforced quality assurance mechanisms for the study.



## COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS SESSION HELD IN ABBOTTABAD - 14 MARCH, 2026

A community awareness session focusing on youth mental health and early identification of psychosis was held in Abbottabad on 14 March 2025 under the TRANSLATE Research Project. The session was organised by the Abbottabad TRANSLATE study site in collaboration with the project team from Peshawar.

The event aimed to raise awareness about mental health, highlight early warning signs of psychosis, encourage timely help-seeking, and strengthen referral pathways between communities and healthcare providers. The session was attended by 35 participants, including students, faculty members, and trainee medical professionals.

Speakers emphasised the importance of early recognition and intervention in improving mental health outcomes and provided an overview of the TRANSLATE project's objectives and services. Educational materials, including awareness pamphlets and project information, were distributed to support ongoing learning.

The session concluded with an interactive question-and-answer discussion, where participants actively engaged with the speakers. Organisers reported that the event was well received and contributed positively to increasing community understanding of psychosis and available mental health services.



## STUDY UPDATES

### Governance Meeting Updates

#### Site Leads Meeting

The recent Site Leads Meeting focused on reviewing recruitment progress, CEI (Community Engagement and Involvement) activities, and operational readiness across all study sites. Site teams reported strong engagement and consistent screening, with ongoing monitoring ensuring protocol adherence. The meeting reaffirmed collaboration between sites and highlighted priorities as the pilot study progresses.

#### Data Monitoring & Safety Board (DMSB) Meeting

The DMSB reviewed the TRANSLATE study's current progress and confirmed that data collection, safety procedures, and ethical safeguards remain satisfactory. No concerns were raised, and the Board approved continuation of all study activities. Routine monitoring will continue to ensure participant safety and high-quality data standards.

#### Steering Committee Meeting

The Steering Committee acknowledged significant progress in project implementation, including the completion of early milestones and smooth initiation of the pilot phase. Members emphasized the importance of CEI activities and community-based awareness as core project strengths. Strategic guidance was provided to support upcoming phases of scale-up and cross-site harmonization.

### Study Progress Updates

#### Work Package 1 (WP1) – Completed

Work Package 1 has been successfully completed, delivering key foundational outputs for the TRANSLATE project. This includes the development of psychosis awareness materials, CEI engagement frameworks, training tools, and strengthened referral pathways. These outputs now guide implementation across all sites in Pakistan.

#### Work Package 2 (WP2) – Pilot Study Underway

WP2 has formally commenced, with data collection now active across five study sites in Pakistan. Recruitment and assessments are ongoing, supported by trained site teams and standardized study tools. CEI activities are running in parallel, strengthening community awareness, improving early identification, and building partnerships with groups such as TSHs (Traditional and Spiritual Healers), educational institutions, and marginalized communities.

## MEET THE PAKISTAN TEAM:



**Prof. Abdul Jalil Khan**  
Academic lead



**Prof. Mukhtar ul Haq Azeemi**  
Lead Consultant



**Prof. Moin Ansari**  
Site lead



**Prof. Imtiaz Ali Dogar**  
Site lead



**Prof. Hazrat Ali**  
Site lead



**Prof. Aftab Alam Khan**  
Site lead



**Dr. Muhammad Firaz Khan**  
Lead Consultant



**Dr. Laila Noushad**  
Post Doc Research Fellow



**Ishfaq Tariq Azeemi**  
Manager Operations



**Dr. Amir Wahab**  
Clinical Research Fellow



**Dr. Shumaila Hamid**  
Manager Academics



**Maryum Rahim**  
Qualitative Researcher



**Syed Muhammad Uzair Shah**  
Assistant Coordinator



**Taha Ayub Azeemi**  
Assistant Coordinator



**Dr. Amir Aziz**  
Clinical Research Fellow



**Fatima Ruby**  
Research Assistant



**Saba Gul**  
Research Assistant



**Eman Ismail**  
Research Assistant



**Zainab Rehman**  
Research Assistant

**MEET THE UK TEAM:**



**Professor Saeed Farooq**  
Chief Investigator



**Dr Nalinda Wellappuli**  
Post-Doctoral Research Associate



**Dr Nishani Fonseka**  
Postdoc Research Associate & Capacity  
Development Lead



**Sualiha Ali**  
Research Assistant



**Abbie Milner**  
Research Assistant and Implementation  
Research Lead

**MEET THE SRI LANKA TEAM:**



**Prof. Athula Sumathipala**  
Director, IRD



**Dr. Rumi Ruben**  
Principal Lead



**Dr. Risitha Wakishta Arachchi**  
Research Assistant



**Sameeha Jabir**  
Research Assistant



**Hirudimalee De Silva**  
Research Assistant



**Oshini Jayasinghe**