American Psychiatric Association Encyclopedia Article

American Psychiatric Association

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American Psychiatric Association

Profesional association of psychiatrists.

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical society whose approximately 38,000 physician and medical student members specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders. The oldest medical specialty society in the United States, the APA was begun in October 1844, when 13 physicians who specialized in the treatment of mental and emotional disorders met in Philadelphia and founded the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane. Their goals were to communicate professionally, cooperate in the collection of data, and improve the treatment of the mentally ill.

One hundred fifty years later, the APA's objectives are still designed to advance care for people with mental illnesses: to improve treatment, rehabilitation, and care of the mentally ill and emotionally disturbed; to promote research, professional education in psychiatry and allied fields, and the prevention of psychiatric disabilities; to advance the standards of psychiatric services and facilities; to foster cooperation among those concerned with the medical, psychological, social, and legal aspects of mental health; to share psychiatric knowledge with other practitioners of medicine, scientists, and the public; and to promote the best interests of patients and others actually or potentially using mental health services.

The APA supports psychiatrists and their service to patients through publications such as the *American Journal of Psychiatry,* the oldest specialty journal in the United States, and the *Psychiatric News,* the Association's official newsletter, as well as numerous books, journals, and reports. The APA's annual meeting attracts more than 15,000 attendees and features hundreds of sessions and presenters. Additionally the Association schedules more than 200 meetings each year among its councils, committees, and task forces to further advance the cause of mental health. The APA also offers a comprehensive continuing medical education program to its members.

For Further Study

Organizations

American Psychiatric Association
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