

Ms Charlene Sunkel

BIOGRAPHY

Ms Sunkel is a leading South African voice for the rights of people with mental health problems. She's been working in the field of mental health, advocacy and human rights since 2003. She authored several papers from a service user's perspective published in well renowned international medical journals. She has written and produced theatre plays and a short feature film on mental disorders – to raise public awareness. Ms Sunkel had been involved in the review and drafting of various policies and legislation in South Africa and at international level, and provided technical assistance to international mental health related reports and documents.



She serves on a number of national and international boards and committees, including: Presidential Working Group on Disability; Ministerial Advisory Committee on Mental Health; Disability Empowerment Concerns Trust; Rural Mental Health Campaign; Editorial Advisory Board of the Lancet Psychiatry; Mental Health and Human Rights FGIP; citiesRISE; World Bank Working Group on Mental Health Financing; World Innovation Summit on Health Forum on Anxiety and Depression; World Health Organization's Civil Society Working Group on NCDs and Mental Health; amongst others. Ms Sunkel is also the Principal Coordinator for the Movement for Global Mental Health. She founded the Global Mental Health Peer Network in 2017 which was officially launched at the 5th Global Mental Health Summit in 2018. Ms Sunkel was diagnosed with schizophrenia in 1991 which led to her passion for mental health advocacy and human rights, where she received a number of national and international awards for her work, with the latest award for Outstanding Achievement in Mental Health from the Swiss Foundation and the World Health Organization.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Ms Sunkel's research interests revolves around mental health care users' perspectives on mental health service delivery and interventions, stigma and discrimination, empowerment of mental health care users, the implementation of relevant policies and legislation, human rights and relevant topics that directly impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of mental health care users. Much of her interests focus on the upscaling of mental health care and services globally and the move towards deinstitutionalization. Titles of her publications include: Empowerment and Partnership in Mental Health (The Lancet Series on Global Mental Health), Mental Health Services – Where do we go from here? (The Lancet Psychiatry), Shortage of Psychiatric Medications in South Africa (The Lancet Psychiatry), Empowerment and Collaboration in Mental Health (Journal of Pioneering Medical Science), A service user's perspective on Excess Mortality in Persons with Severe Mental Disorders (World Psychiatry). Ms Sunkel had been involved in The Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health, both as an advisory group member and commissioner, and as co-author for The Lancet Commission on the Future of Psychiatry.