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'We will deliver targeted information'

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'We will deliver targeted information'



Mr Subroto Bagchi, chairman, WSF spoke to Biospectrum on concerns haunting the mental health of Indian youth and how WSF aims to change this scenario. Here are the excerpts:

How was this plan conceived? What triggered the idea of establishing an organization like this?

My early awareness of mental issues came as a child. My father had mental health issues, my mother explained it to me, but because the family was not in denial, and were not stigmatizing it, we were able to deal with the problem. As I grew up, I saw many people affected by such issues. Mental illnesses like depression, bipolar disorder or epilepsy go hand in hand. The cause could be attributed to genetic issues, they are sometimes, also compounded by behavioral problems. However, mental health issues contain a broad spectrum of disorders. I have spent decades in the IT industry, which attracts the best and most brilliant people. That industry helped me analyze various mental health issues that effect youth closely. In that context, when NIMHANS invited me for a collaboration, I got a chance to realize my dream of doing my bit for the mental health crisis. In my journey, I studied the Mayo clinic in the US, one of the most respected medical facilities in the world. What surprised me was mayo clinics' research strength, that is needed to have 42000 patients publications. Patient publications are written by patients for patients. It occurred to me that medical science is using content in its fight against illness. Content is a very powerful tool and in India, we understand it very little. When you use the power of content, ideas get hands and legs. When an idea is written as an blog or an article which gets published in a newspaper, it gains a life and starts spreading. I shared my thought process at NIMHANS to collaborate research and technology in making content our alliance against the war of mental illness. Thus the organization was formed.

There is already a plethora of information regarding mental health. How is White Swan's service of knowledge delivery special?

First and foremost, we are targeting India. You said exactly the right thing 'plethora' but one gets lost in a plethora. Is it for India? Is it in Indian languages? Does it target the Indian socio-economic brackets? Indian youth speak many regional languages and many do not understand English. Mental issues are not a rich man's problem alone. Â It can affect any section of the society. So socially relevant, understandable and much focused material must be delivered, that is where we come in and are looking to deliver. Content will be assesed for relevancy and comply with both public and online platforms. We plan to follow doctors and educational institutions, and create content out of the results. It will be very India centric, and delivered in such a way that the urban youth in India can consume it easily.Â

It a very interesting name 'White Swan'. What does it symbolize?

Â In every culture in the world, a swan symbolises harmony and equanimity. When a swan glides on water, you don't realize that it is furiously paddling under the water. Same is life, it has a lot of stress, but despite all the pressures, one must ensure that one swims in harmony. Our work is focussed in that direction.

How do you plan to generate funding?

It's a not-for-profit organisation. It will be funded through the commitment we have received from like-minded people who have come forward to help.

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