

Nominees of the Guideline Development Group for WHO Guideline on interventions to reduce social isolation and loneliness – from children to older people

Surname, first name: Bernal, Camila Ronderos

Institutional affiliation(s): Executive Director of Keralty Compassionate Communities

Academic degrees: MA Urban Development, PhD Candidate in Public and Urban Policy

Area of Expertise: Civic Engagement and Participatory Strategies, Compassionate Healthcare and Communities

Region: AMRO

Camila is an anthropologist with a masters in urban development and is a PhD candidate in Public and Urban Policy. She is currently the Executive Director of Keralty Compassionate Communities in the US and Fundacion Keralty in Colombia, a nonprofit focused on developing models and interventions that empower communities to achieve better health and wellbeing while also working with the healthcare sector to connect them to the true needs of their communities and to transform the way healthcare is provided. The organization leads the implementation of Compassionate Healthcare which aims at including loneliness and SDOH assessments and connecting through social prescriptions with resources in their own communities that can help them and improve their wellbeing. The organization also implements Compassionate communities which aims at strengthening social capital and community based care for people with high levels of dependency (mental health, disabilities, end of life) so that they and their family achieve better wellbeing. Another line of work includes Healthy Rural Communities which trains local leaders on early health alerts and builds on community resources to transform health care outcomes. Lastly, the organization's wellbeing program for health care teams aims to reduce and prevent burnout, increase wellbeing and teamwork.

Surname, first name: Chipps, Jennifer

Institutional affiliation(s): Emeritus Professor, Chair Digital Health, Faculty of Community Health Sciences, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

Academic degrees: BSc(Nurs), BSc(Hon) Psychology, Masters in Public Health, PhD Telehealth, ANSA – Fellow of Academic Nursing, South Africa,

Area of Expertise: Mental Health, Digital Health, mHealth, AI, Epidemiology & Systematic Reviews

Region: AFRO

Professor (Dr) Jennifer Chipps is an Emeritus Professor at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in the Faculty of Community Health Sciences and the Research Chair in Person-centered Digital Health. Before joining UWC, Jennifer held positions at the University of Sydney in Australia, NZ Health Research Council in New Zealand, NSW Department of Health in Australia and the Department of Telemedicine at University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN), South Africa. She holds a Ph.D. in Telehealth from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. She serves on AMIA - the International Nursing Informatics Special Interest Group (SIG), the Western Cape Department of Health Working Group on Child and Adolescent Health Evidence Based Gap Maps, is the Chair of ANSA AI and Digital Health SIG and has been nominated for the Steering Committee of the Presidential PhD Programme in Digital Transformation. Her research interests include digital health, including AI, informatics and mHealth; immersive educational digital technologies, epidemiology, mental health and evidence synthesis.

Surname, first name: d'Hombres, Béatrice

Institutional affiliation(s): Senior policy officer, researcher Joint Research Centre European Commission

Academic degrees: PhD in Economics

Area of Expertise: Social and health economics, survey methods, micro econometrics

Region: EURO

Béatrice d'Hombres leads the Survey Methods and Analysis Centre at the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission. She has coordinated the European Parliament Pilot Project on Loneliness, which aimed to support evidence-based policymaking through the collection of pan-European data on loneliness, a comprehensive review of existing evidence, the identification of knowledge gaps, and the mapping of loneliness interventions. More information on the Loneliness Project can be found [here](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-66582-0). Béatrice is one of the authors of the recent Springer book *Loneliness in Europe: Determinants, Risks and Interventions* (<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-66582-0>). More broadly, she has actively contributed in recent years to both the policy discussion and the evidence base on loneliness in Europe. Béatrice's research has been published in international journals, including *Social Science & Medicine*, *European Economic Review*, *Eastern Economic Journal*, *Health Economics*, *The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy*, and *Social Indicators Research*.

Surname, first name: Hajebi, Ahmad

Institutional affiliation(s): Professor of Psychiatry in the Department of Psychiatry, Dean of the Faculty of Behavioral Sciences and Mental Health, Director of the Research Center for Addiction and Risky Behaviors (ReCARB); Iran University of Medical Sciences

Academic degrees: MD, Board Certified in Psychiatry MSc, International Master in Mental Health policy and Services

Area of Expertise: Psychiatry Epidemiology, Community Psychiatry, Suicide Prevention

Region: EMRO

Professor Ahmad Hajebi is the Dean of the Faculty of Behavioral Sciences and Mental Health and the Director of the Research Center for Addiction and Risky Behaviors (ReCARB) at Iran University of Medical Sciences, where he also serves as a Professor in the Department of Psychiatry. From 2007 to 2013, Dr. Hajebi served as the Director of the Mental Health Office, and from 2013 to 2023, he held the position of Director General of the Department for Mental Health and Substance Abuse at the Ministry of Health. Since February 2024, he has been a member of the WHO Technical Advisory Group on Social Connection. Prof. Hajebi has authored numerous articles and book chapters and has played a leading role in designing and implementing several national initiatives. These include the National Suicide Registry System, the National Program for Mental Health Self-Care, and the Comprehensive Mental and Social Health Services Program, which integrates mental health into the primary healthcare system. He was a principal investigator in both rounds of the Iran National Mental Health Survey (2010 and 2021) and the Persian Youth Cohort Study (since 2016). Currently, he teaches community psychiatry to psychiatric residents.

Surname, first name: Holt-Lunstad, Julianne

Institutional affiliation(s): Professor of psychology and neuroscience at Brigham Young University

Academic degrees: M.S., PhD

Area of Expertise: Psychology and Neuroscience, Social Connection, Loneliness, and Social Isolation

Region: AMRO

Dr. Julianne Holt-Lunstad, a distinguished professor of psychology and neuroscience, and director of the Social Connections Lab at Brigham Young University, is known for her groundbreaking research on social connection. Her work has significantly influenced our understanding of the critical role of social connection in health and longevity. Her seminal studies revealed that lacking social connection is a major risk factor for mortality, comparable to well-established risk factors such as smoking and obesity. In addition to her extensive scientific publication record, Dr. Holt-Lunstad served as the lead scientific editor for the US Surgeon General Advisory on Isolation and Loneliness, establishing a framework for a national strategy. She regularly advises organizations across sectors aimed at addressing this issue, and her work is regularly featured in major media outlets worldwide. Her dedication to bridging the gap between evidence and action underscores her commitment to fostering a healthier, more connected society.

Surname, first name: Iwuagwu, Anthony

Institutional affiliation(s): Lecturer and Researcher, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, and University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

Academic degrees: Bsc and Msw Social work, University of Nigeria Nsukka Nigeria

Professional Diploma in Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Msc Social gerontology, University of Southampton, UK; PhD in view: University of New South Wales Sydney

Area of Expertise: Social work, community services, social gerontology- especially in aging, caregiving, disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

Region: AFRO

Anthony Obinna Iwuagwu is a dedicated academic and researcher with a strong interdisciplinary background in social work, community services, and social gerontology. His work focuses on addressing complex social issues affecting older adults and ethnically diverse populations, particularly within the context of aging, migration, disability and access to care. With extensive cross-country teaching experience across Nigeria, Canada, and Australia, Anthony has delivered undergraduate and postgraduate courses in social work and community services and social gerontology, supervised student research, and played a key role in field education and curriculum development. His research explores culturally responsive care, social inclusion, and service access among culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Anthony has published in peer-reviewed journals, presented at national and international conferences, and collaborated on multidisciplinary research and community-based projects. Beyond academia, Anthony is committed to community engagement, capacity-building, and the mentoring of emerging professionals in social work and community services. He currently serves as a member of the Course and Industry Advisory Committee at Southern Cross Institute, Sydney, and sits on the board of Bridging the Gap Inc., a Sydney-based community organization. His work continues to bridge the gap between academic research and practical solutions for vulnerable and underrepresented populations.

Surname, first name: Käll, Anton

Institutional affiliation(s): Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Center for Social and Affective Neuroscience, Linköping University, Sweden

Academic degrees: Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, Board-licensed clinical psychologist

Area of Expertise: Psychological interventions, Psychotherapy, Social Determinants of Mental Health

Region: EURO

Anton Käll is trained as a clinical psychologist and specialized in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). He earned his PhD in clinical psychology from Linköping University in Sweden. For his dissertation, he investigated the use of internet-based psychological interventions for reducing loneliness in community samples of adults. Such interventions have previously proven to be successful in helping deal with a wide range of mental health problems, and our studies indicated that they are effective for reducing feelings of loneliness as well. After completing the PhD, he has been involved in projects expanding on the conclusions drawn from the randomized controlled trials, including testing similar CBT-based interventions for young people. His overarching research interest is understanding how loneliness and other social determinants interact with mental health, and to develop effective interventions when the social circumstances contribute to mental health problems. In addition to the focus on interventions, he is also interested in investigating behavioral and cognitive correlates of loneliness and how these may help create a lasting sense of disconnection for some individuals.

Surname, first name: Kasujja, Rosco

Institutional affiliation(s): Director of the Department of Mental Health & Community Psychology at Makerere University

Academic degrees: Phd Clinical Psychology

Area of Expertise: Clinical Psychology, Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT), Refugee and Community Mental Health, Cultural Adaptation of Psychological Interventions

Region: AFRO

Rosco Kasujja is an Associate Professor at Makerere University where he has spent over ten years in the Department of Mental Health and Community Psychology. He has a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and has been working in the field of mental health since 2008. He has partnered with many NGOs and academic institutions both locally and internationally by providing mental health training and clinical supervision to both humanitarian workers and other professionals operating in the field of mental health and other service areas. He is an internationally Certified Trainer for Interpersonal psychotherapy for Groups (IPT-G), a model that local NGOs in Uganda and Africa use in their day-to-day community interventions. Dr. Kasujja has carried out research internationally and locally. His areas of interest include the cultural adaptation of mental health intervention and measures, competences for both mental health specialists and non-specialists in Uganda, social connection, and depression. His practice has been in mental health programming with the major aim of transforming institutions in Uganda.

Surname, first name: Khoury, Brigitte

Institutional affiliation(s): Professor, Vice chair of psychological affairs, Dept of Psychiatry, American U of Beirut

Academic degrees: Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, Fellowship/ post doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Area of Expertise: Mental Health, Clinical Psychology, Psychotherapy

Region: EMRO

Dr. Khoury is a professor and clinical psychologist at the Psychiatry Department at the Faculty of Medicine, American University of Beirut, where she serves as the Vice Chair for psychological affairs. She is the founding director of the Clinical Psychology Training Program, and the Director of the Arab Regional Center for Research and Training in Mental Health. Her main activities revolve around her clinical work, teaching, supervising psychology graduate students and conducting research. Her research interests focus on issues related to sexuality and reproductive health, refugee mental health, and comparing psychology across international settings. Dr. Khoury was elected as the vice president of the founding board of the Lebanese Order of Psychologists in 2022. She is also the founding president emeritus of the Lebanese Psychological Association. She is a fellow of the American Psychological Association, where she was the past president for Division 52 (Society for Global Psychology). She has served on the boards of several professional associations such as the World Federation for Mental health and the committee on bioethics in mental health at UNESCO. She is currently the president elect of the International Union of Psychological Science. Dr. Khoury is a consultant for the World Health Organization, and several NGOs and UN bodies.

Surname, first name: Kondo, Naoki

Institutional affiliation(s): Professor and Chair, Department of Social Epidemiology, Graduate School of Medicine and School of Public Health, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan

Academic degrees: MD and PhD at Yamanashi Medical University

Area of Expertise: Social Epidemiology, Health Equity, Social Determinants of Health

Region: WPRO

Naoki Kondo is the vice chief investigator of the Japan Gerontological Evaluation Study (JAGES) investigating community and social environments that promote healthy and equitable longevity, including the prevention of non-communicable diseases, social isolation, loneliness, and the creation of Ikigai (purpose in life), among other factors contributing to well-being. His recent research addresses health and well-being inequality in community settings, conducting intervention studies with local and central governments using “community-diagnosis” data. Naoki is a member of Technical Advisory Group on Social Connection and the Clinical Consortium on Healthy Ageing, WHO. He holds multiple roles as committee members and advisors for parliamentary groups and the Japanese Government, including serving on the committee for tackling social isolation and loneliness in the Cabinet Office.

Surname, first name: Lim, Michelle

Institutional affiliation(s): Senior Lecturer in Clinical Psychology at the University of Sydney
Chief Scientific Advisor to Ending Loneliness Together, a national network addressing loneliness in Australia

Academic degrees: PhD in Clinical Psychology, Registered Clinical Psychologist, Loneliness and Social Isolation

Area of Expertise: Digital Mental Health Interventions, Clinical Psychology, Public Mental Health Policy and Advocacy

Region: WPRO

Associate Professor Lim leads the Social Health and Wellbeing Group at the Prevention Research Collaboration, Sydney School of Public Health, the University of Sydney. She is also the scientific chair and CEO of Ending Loneliness Together, a national not-for-profit organisation focused on addressing chronic loneliness in Australians across the lifespan. Associate Professor Lim was the chief investigator of the Australian Loneliness Report (2018), the Young Australian Loneliness Survey (2019), and the State of the Nation Report on Social Connection in Australia (2023). Her work informs state and federal governments, not-for-profit health and community organisations, and the corporate sector. In 2020, Associate Professor Lim cofounded and was the inaugural co-director of the Global Initiative on Loneliness and Connection (GILC), a non-profit organisation based in Washington DC. It comprises of the leading authority organisations across 12 countries committed to ending the pressing global issue of loneliness and social isolation. She is currently the co-vice chair of the International Scientific Board of the GILC.

Surname, first name: Maulik, Pallab K

Institutional affiliation(s): Director of Research, George Institute for Global Health India

Academic degrees: MD, PhD, MSc

Area of Expertise: Psychiatry, mental health, public health

Region: SEARO

Pallab leads Research department at The George Institute for Global Health, India. He trained as a psychiatrist at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, received training in public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, as well as Johns Hopkins School of Public Health where he pursued his Masters and Doctoral training, respectively. Professor Maulik has worked with the World Health Organisation (WHO), Geneva on Project Atlas and other mental health programs, and clinically as a psychiatrist in India and Australia. He has worked for more than 25 years in global mental health and has research network across multiple countries and institutions where he is affiliated with and with whom he collaborates on many projects. His particular research interests include social determinants of health, especially mental health services, mental disorders, international mental health, and intellectual disability. He is a Principal Investigator or co-investigator on many large mental health projects in India and abroad. He primarily focuses on delivering affordable and accessible mental health care for disadvantaged and marginalized communities in India, while using technology-enabled solutions to enable the health system to function more efficiently. He also leads a significant programme of work on stigma related to mental health. He was an Intermediate Career Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance Fellow from 2014-19 and currently is a Senior Fellow of the Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance.

Surname, first name: Qualter, Pam

Institutional affiliation(s): Professor of Psychology for Education at The University of Manchester

Academic degrees: PhD in Psychology

Area of Expertise: Causes and consequences of loneliness, Individual differences in the prospective profile of loneliness across the life-course

Region: EURO

Pamela Qualter is the UK's leading scientific expert on child and adolescent loneliness. She works with the UK Government's Tackling Loneliness Team, recently being commissioned by them to write an evidence gap report on loneliness. Previously, Pamela led the BBC Loneliness Experiment, then the world's largest study of loneliness. Pamela has received extensive funding from several sources to examine loneliness, and is currently working on a Medical Research Council funded grant focused on the development of a new measure of loneliness for youth, and a randomized control evaluation of an intervention designed for primary school aged children in the UK funded by the Kavli Trust. She is also working on a project, funded by the UKRI, that includes the development of a social media measure that offers better exploration of the role of social media in the emotional and social lives of young people. Pamela has a consistent track record with publications exploring the phenomenon of loneliness among youth, and more recently has explored the role of place in the experience of loneliness among youth, using the socio-ecological framework. Pamela sits on several advisory and steering groups, including the WHO Scientific Advisory Group, mapping the evidence for interventions to mitigate social isolation and loneliness, the UK's Emerging Minds UKRI Network, and the Mary Foundation, Copenhagen, Denmark (2011-current). She is also a member of the Global Initiative on Loneliness and Connection, advising on youth loneliness. Pamela's expertise involves large longitudinal studies, where she has explored the causes and consequences of loneliness, and the individual differences in the prospective profile of loneliness across the life-course. Pamela has also used experimental and observational methods to examine key aspects of loneliness, including impacts on health, aiming to understand what keeps people stuck in loneliness.

Surname, first name: Shankar, Aparna

Institutional affiliation(s): Professor – Psychology, FLAME University, Pune, India

Academic degrees: PhD

Area of Expertise: Social isolation; loneliness; health; ageing;

Region: SEARO

Aparna Shankar is Professor – Psychology and Head – Department of Psychological Sciences at FLAME University (India). Aparna's work focuses on social relationships, health and wellbeing in later life, using data from various ageing cohorts. She is also co-chair of the Technical Advisory Group to the WHO Commission for Social Connection.

Surname, first name: **Sikander, Siham**

Institutional affiliation(s): Senior Research Fellow, Global Mental Health Dept of Primary Care & Mental Health, University of Liverpool, UK Global Centre for Research on Mental Health Inequalities Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust, UK; Senior Research Scientist Pakistan Institute of Living and Learning (PILL), Pakistan

Academic degrees: PhD, FCPS, MB.BS

Area of Expertise: Global Mental Health; Public Mental Health

Region: EMRO

Dr Siham Sikander is a psychiatrist by training and a global mental health academic. He has over two decades worth of experience of developing and evaluating task-shifted, health systems based, life-course mental health interventions (including suicide prevention intervention) within low resource settings. Dr Sikander uses social and technological innovations in all his task-shared interventions. Using community-based lay peers with lived experience and using tech-assisted platforms to treat common mental health conditions has been his forte. He is experienced in designing and conducting large community-based randomized trials in Pakistan and south Asia. He also leads a birth cohort in Pakistan which generates epidemiological insights into modifiable risk factors for common mental health conditions in Pakistan. As a public mental health academic, he works closely with partners across Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Bangladesh to inform policy and practice for promoting mental wellbeing of individuals across the life course. He continues to hold a number of academic and policy-environment affiliations within the institutions of Pakistan. He mentors early and mid-career level allied health professionals within south Asia to build and sustain research and mental health leadership capabilities within south Asia.

Surname, first name: **Welch, Vivian**

Institutional affiliation(s): Senior Scientists, Bruyere Health Research Institute, Canada. Associate professor, University of Ottawa, School of Epidemiology and Public Health

Academic degrees: PhD Population health and epidemiology

Area of Expertise: Health equity, systematic reviews, ageing in place, guideline development

Region: AMRO

Dr. Vivian Welch is an expert in health equity, systematic reviews and guideline development with a focus on healthy ageing. She holds an Applied Public Health Chair from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Public Health Agency of Canada focused on healthy ageing for all (2024-2029). She led the development of equity-focused guidelines for systematic reviews (PRISMA-Equity 2012), guideline development (with the GRADE Working group 2017) and randomized trials (CONSORT-Equity 2017). She is editor in chief of the Campbell Collaboration, senior scientist at the Bruyère Health Research Institute, and associate professor at University of Ottawa School of Epidemiology and Public Health.

Surname, first name: **Wongpakaran, Tinakon**

Institutional affiliation(s): Professor of Psychiatry Faculty of Medicine, Chiang Mai University

Academic degrees: MD, FRCPsychT

Area of Expertise: Psychiatry and Psychotherapy

Region: WPRO

Professor Tinakon Wongpakaran, MD, FRCPsychT, is a distinguished professor of psychiatry at the Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, Chiang Mai University, Thailand. He completed his psychiatry residency at Chiang Mai University and a psychotherapy fellowship, focusing on group psychotherapy, at Mount Sinai Hospital, University of Toronto in 2006. In 2019, he received a diploma from the Subspecialty Board of Geriatric Psychiatry. Professor Tinakon currently serves as the Head of the Psychotherapy and Personality Disorder Clinic and is the Academic Director of the international master's program in Mental Health at the Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary School, Chiang Mai University. He provides psychiatric care in both hospital and long-term care settings, specializing in adult and geriatric psychiatry, as well as psychotherapy. His interests include depressive disorders, suicidality, geriatric depression, psychotherapy, personality disorders, psychosocial factors related to depression, measurement development, and psychometric testing. He is also passionate about positive psychology, aiming to prevent depression relapse through positive character development. Professor Tinakon has published extensively in the fields of psychiatry, mental health, and inner strengths informed by Buddhist principles and their clinical applications. He is currently developing and empirically evaluating a culturally adapted psychotherapy model—Inner-Strength-Based Perfections Therapy (iSPT)—which aims to cultivate positive cognition, emotional resilience, and wisdom in the treatment of psychiatric disorders, with a particular emphasis on comorbidity with personality disorders.

Surname, first name: **Bin, Yu**

Institutional affiliation(s): Associate Professor, Institute of Applied Psychology, Tianjin University

Academic degrees: PhD

Area of Expertise: Health Psychology; Psychophysiology; Digital Phenotyping

Region: WPRO

Dr. Bin Yu is an Associate Professor of Health Psychology at the Institute of Applied Psychology, Tianjin University. His research focuses on the health consequences of social isolation and loneliness, and the protective effects of social connection on psychological and physiological stress responses. He is particularly interested in developing strategies to mitigate the negative impacts of social disconnection across the lifespan. Dr. Yu earned his Ph.D. in Social Psychology from Nankai University in 2014. From 2016 to 2017, he was an academic visitor at the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College London. His interdisciplinary expertise—spanning psychology, public health, and digital health—enables him to explore social connection from both behavioral and population-based perspectives. He has authored over 40 peer-reviewed publications, many of which examine the health implications of social disconnection, particularly among older adults in China. Currently, his team investigates how digital technologies influence loneliness in both younger and older populations and explores innovative ways to assess social connection using digital phenotyping methods.