

## **REPORT on MENTAL HEALTH in the ERA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

(full report available at [www.mentalhealthinternational.ca](http://www.mentalhealthinternational.ca))

### **SERIES OF RECAPS (3)**

#### **The Promise or Peril of Artificial Intelligence – which will it be?**

*(Report author Bill Wilkerson, LL.D. (Hon) was a former corporate chief and senior executive and a specialist in crisis management. His background ranges across business, government, politics, the arts, broadcasting, and major league sports.*

*Bill is MHI Executive Chairman and McMaster University Industry Professor of International Mental Health and in the mental health field, Wilkerson:*

- *Co-Founded and led the Canadian-based Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health (1998-2011).*
- *Chaired a business-led Pan-European campaign targeting depression in the workplace (2013-17).*
- *Founded and chaired a five-city (Washington, Ottawa, Boston, Toronto, Denver) US/Canada Forum on Mental Health and Productivity (2007-13).*

**PORT HOPE, ONTARIO, CANADA** (June, 2019)- The effects of AI will be heavily centered on working populations and families already stressed-out by the globalization of industries, job losses and the pervasive, addictive attributes of social media, on-line misinformation and all-day/all-night bad news generated by cable television and various digital platforms.

The incentives for pursuing an agenda of prevention of the disabling and deadly effects of mental illness in the 3<sup>rd</sup> decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are these:

The world's transition to a brain-based economy that, by definition, provides economic incentives for investments in brain-based mental health while accentuating, also by definition, the disturbing effects of mental illness on brain-based productive capacity in workforces across the world.

- The dawning of a new era of discovery in the field of genetics, epigenetics and brain science that could lead the way to ending the crisis in world mental health if – IF! – strategic research investments in these allied fields are adequate, sustainable and transmit the results into “clinical care.” A genuine concern.

- The effects of the stress epidemic. The environments that we, human beings, create, and are born into, and in which we live and work are instrumental in causing disease including mental illness. This, chronic disorders overtake infectious disease as #1 world public health concern.

### **Stress and the Loss of Self at work**

AI may force 375 million people to switch and lose occupations. The kind of stress that invades the individual's sense of self, sense of place and sense of purpose at work and in life.

AI is likely to be a source of the kinds of stress that the National Institute for Mental Health has identified as a "Negative Valence System" of risk factors that can drive mental illness: fear, frustration, rumination, threat, anxiety and loss.

These specific risk factors contest those cerebral skillsets demanded by brain-based economy – trust, fairness, job fulfillment, common sense and common decency. Once seen as the 'soft side' of managing the workplace, fostering these qualities of mind and spirit constitute the new Hard Skills of Management for the AI workplace.

Human vulnerability to AI will be triggered by how the deployment of AI takes place and whether it is a serious affront to *"who I am, my self-worth, my self-esteem, whether it generates emotional and physical isolation, rumination, deep frustration."*

Nobel Laureate Dr. Eric Kandel tells us that "preserving or losing the self" is crucial to all human beings: "self-awareness leads us to why we exist - one's sense of purpose and sense of being present." In fact, this is what mental illness undoes.

The loss of self, loss of purpose, a fading personal identity. In effect, the stuff of depression, anxiety and for some, the stuff of suicide. On this basis, we can see that AI – specifically its massive injection into our lives - contains a roster of "causes and effects" that will produce harm or safety for the mental health of millions.

Therefore, the prospects, promise and peril of AI must be communicated and transparently planned for. The superiority of the human beings over technology in the workplace is job one.

Refer: Bill Wilkerson, 001-905-885-1751; © 001-905-376-9692