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25 Oct 2011, Loma Linda, California, United States...Jim Ponder/ANN staff

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While many factors contribute to mental health, including a committed spiritual life, conference leaders said a biblical worldview doesn't automatically insulate people from things such as depression, anxiety and other challenges to mental well-being.

“We need to remove the stigma that some people have attached to emotional and mental health issues and recognize the vulnerability we all have to these issues,” said Dr. Allan Handysides, director of the Adventist Church’s Health Ministries department.

“The acceptance of a biblical world view tells us that everyone is broken. All of us in the church need to address these issues with that humility,” Handysides said.

The four-day event offered workshops and training for church administrators, pastors and health professionals to better recognize and treat those living in a faith community with anything from mild depression to a more severe emotional unbalance.

“We hope people will go back to their communities with an understanding that mental health issues are very prevalent,” Handysides said.

Organizers said the conference, "Emotional Health & Wellness: a biblical worldview in practice" was the Adventist Church's first global conference on religion and mental health.

“There is a consensus throughout the denomination that the time has come to discuss these issues,” said Dr. Carlos Fayard, chair of the conference planning committee and associate professor of psychiatry at Loma Linda University School of Medicine.

One statistic revealed at the conference suggests that roughly 20 percent of people each year will seek some form of help for emotional health.

Dr. David Puder, a psychiatry resident at Loma Linda and conference participant, said the event underscored the balance of the profession's theories with a theistic approach, which he feels offers more effective outcomes.

"Under the theistic model of the art of healing, the healer taps into the God's love ... and brings that love to those he works with," Puder said.

The conference, held from October 12 to 15, drew some 500 participants and presenters from more than 50 countries and top universities, including Harvard, Duke, Brigham Young and the University of California, Los Angeles, as well as the World Health Organization.

Sergii Lutskiy, Health Ministries director for the Adventist Church in Ukraine, was one of 12 participants from the denomination's Euro-Asia Division. He said he hopes insights gained from