JUNE 2026

MI MIND Memorandum

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 2

MI MIND AND SUICIDE PREVENTION TAKE A GLOBAL STAGE

The work of Zero Suicide International® has received global recognition through major international events and TIME magazine. “Everyone who is part of MI Mind is a part of the work of Zero Suicide International,” says Brian Ahmedani, Ph.D., LMSW, MI Mind Program Co-Director. “A main component of Zero Suicide, MI Mind is doing such incredible work. We are making a difference, our program has momentum, and we are changing the world.”

WHO 79th World Health Assembly

The Zero Suicide International team gave a keynote presentation on the Zero Suicide model at an Official Side Event of the 79th World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva, Switzerland on May 18. The WHA, the decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO), brings together delegations from all WHO Member States annually to address global health priorities.

Titled “A Global Pursuit of Suicide Prevention: Turning Evidence into Action,” this was the first ever Official Side Event on suicide prevention at the WHA. The focus of the event was to highlight evidence-based approaches to reducing suicide, strengthening health systems, addressing social determinants of health, and accelerating global action.

Representatives from the Ministries of Health from Nepal, Sri Lanka, Portugal, Brazil, and South Africa also participated in the event, alongside leaders from the WHO, the International Association for Suicide Prevention, and other global suicide prevention partners.

“Not only was it an honor to be invited, but it was deeply moving for everyone involved in the initiative to know that the Zero

Gathering at the WHO headquarters for the World Health Assembly are, from left: Joslyn Westphal, MPH, Director of Operations, Zero Suicide International; Brian Ahmedani, Ph.D., LMSW, MI Mind Co-Director and Zero Suicide International Executive Director; Deepak Prabhakar, M.D., MPH, Chair of Psychiatry, Henry Ford Health; and John Zervos, J.D., Executive Director of the Global Health Initiative, Henry Ford Health.

Continued on page 2

In this issue of 'The Mem'

‘On MI Mind’ Webinars

Get Ready for Regional Meetings

Happy Pride Month

Practice Profile: Macomb Medical Clinic

Recommended Reading: The Checklist Manifesto by Atul Gawande

New MI Mind Team Member: Carli Smith

Frankly Speaking: Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative

Walk with MI Mind

Pets of MI Mind - Eric

MI MIND

Support for MI Mind is provided by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM) as part of the BCBSM Value Partnerships program. Although BCBSM and MI Mind work collaboratively, the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of BCBSM or any of its employees.

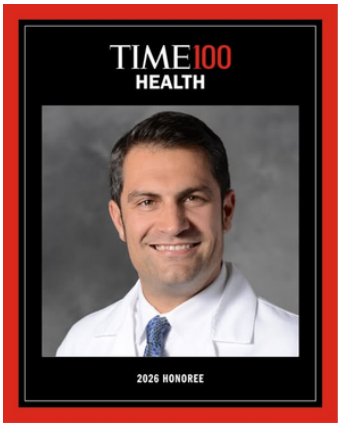
Continued from page 1

MI MIND AND SUICIDE PREVENTION TAKE A GLOBAL STAGE

Suicide model will be socialized around the world, saving countless lives in the process," says Dr. Ahmedani.

International Summit in Indonesia

The 6th International Zero Suicide Summit, hosted by Zero Suicide International and taking place Oct. 12-14, 2026, in Bali, Indonesia, will feature a panel of MI Mind experts. Cathrine Frank, M.D., MI Mind Co-Director; Heather Omdal, MPH, MI Mind Program Manager; and William Beecroft, M.D., Medical Director, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan Behavioral Health and Behavioral Health Strategy and Planning, will present a panel discussion. Visit www.zerosuicide.org for details and to make plans to attend.



TIME Recognizes Suicide Prevention through TIME100 Health List

TIME magazine named MI Mind Co-Director Brian Ahmedani, Ph.D., LMSW, in the Innovators category of the 2026 TIME100 Health List of the World's Most Influential Leaders in Health. "TIME's recognition reflects the importance and impact of the work we are doing," says Dr. Ahmedani. "It is evidence that people care about suicide prevention, and as one of the major components of this work, everyone participating in MI Mind earned this recognition."

MAKE A REGULAR 'LUNCH DATE' WITH ON MI MIND WEBINARS

The 'On MI Mind' series of free webinars covered a variety of topics with inspiring presenters in the 2025-2026 program year. We are planning our next series and want to hear from you. Is there a speaker, topic or resource you'd like to see, or would you like to host a webinar? Send us an email at MIMInd@hfhs.org, and we'll connect with you for details.

CME and CEU credit is available for all webinars. In the 2026-2027 program year, if you are in Year 2+, attending one webinar is part of the annual training curriculum. There will be multiple topics to select from to fulfill this requirement. A detailed calendar will be shared later this summer.

Anyone interested in the topics is welcome to attend. If you missed the webinars, the videos are posted on our Youtube page for viewing at any time.

**Our final webinar of the 2025-2026 program year was rescheduled for the 2026-2027 program year: Amy Loree, Ph.D., LP, PMH-C, Associate Scientist at Henry Ford Health and Assistant Professor, Research at the MSU College of Human Medicine, will delve into identifying, preventing and treating unique mental health concerns during pregnancy. Watch for details in the coming months.

A very special thanks to our 2025-2026 series presenters: Doree Ann V. Espiritu, M.D., Anthony Reffi, Ph.D., Debbra Snyder, LLP, CAADC, CCS, Maureen (Mo) Connolly, M.D., and Larry Herren, LMSW.

GET READY FOR REGIONAL MEETINGS

The MI Mind team is excited to see you at an upcoming Regional Meeting:

- Tuesday, June 16 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
  Amway Grand Plaza
  187 Monroe Ave NW, Grand Rapids

- Tuesday, June 23 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
  Kensington Hotel
  3500 S. State Street, Ann Arbor

Attendance at one Regional Meeting by a Practice Clinical Champion or Practice Liaison is required and fulfills the value-based reimbursement (VBR) requirement for your organization's scorecard. Physician Organization (PO) leadership are encouraged to attend but not required. Registration for this year's in-person meetings is closed.

Meetings include lunch and opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practices. Highlights include presentations by MI Mind clinicians and a demonstration of our MI Mind dashboard by MI Mind Senior Analyst Jeff Warchall and MI Mind Clinical Quality Improvement Lead Olga Gagnon, DMSc, MSN, FNP-BC, RN.

Virtual Option Registration Now Open

For those who can't make it to one of the in-person meetings, we are offering an interactive, virtual option on Friday, June 26 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. On-camera attendance fulfills the requirement for your PO and VBR scorecards. Click here to register.

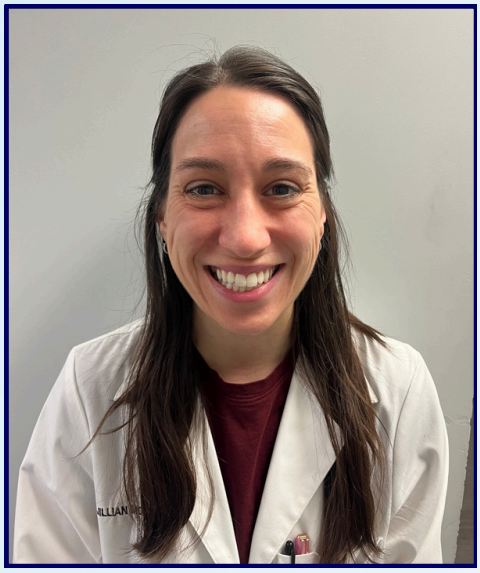
Register Today for the November Collaborative-wide Meeting

The 2026 MI Mind Collaborative-wide Meeting is Friday, Nov. 6, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at The H Hotel in Midland. Physician Organization (PO) leadership are required to attend to receive credit toward their organization's PO scorecard. Practice Clinical Champions and Practice Liaisons are welcome and encouraged to attend but are not required. Participants enjoy a delicious lunch in addition to opportunities to connect with MI Mind colleagues from across the state. Follow this link to register.

HAPPY PRIDE MONTH FROM THE MI MIND TEAM

MI Mind proudly recognizes Pride Month and celebrates the strength, resilience, and diversity of LGBTQIA+ communities. We remain committed to fostering inclusive spaces and advancing mental health support for all.

EVERY PATIENT, EVERY TIME: A PDSA CAN BE LIFE CHANGING



Jillian Monticciolo, PA-C, Macomb Medical Clinic

A modification to the interval between suicide risk screenings that Jillian Monticciolo, PA-C, implemented for the practice's PDSA uncovered a patient who was in desperate need of intervention.

"We had been screening only at the annual visit or for a mental health complaint," she explains. "For the PDSA, our two-week change was to screen every patient at every visit."

A 48-year-old female patient came in for regular refills on medications prescribed for physical conditions. After she completed the PHQ-9, she began sobbing. "She told us, 'I wasn't going to mention anything until you gave me this form, but I am feeling suicidal.'"

If the team had been following the previous policy, they would have missed it. "Screening opened the door enough so she could tell me what was going on, and we could get her set up with resources immediately," says Monticciolo.

Prior to joining MI Mind, Monticciolo and her colleagues at Macomb Medical Clinic, part of Oakland Physician Network Services, would have referred the patient to the hospital emergency department. However, because of training and conversations with the MI Mind team, Monticciolo felt comfortable referring her patient to Charlie Health, an intensive online therapy program, instead of the hospital.

"Because of MI Mind, I feel more confident differentiating between active and passive suicidal thoughts and completed MI Mind's suicide prevention plan with the patient. I've known her for five years, and she told me she wasn't going act on her thoughts but was feeling overwhelmed. The MI Mind steps and tools enabled me to keep her out of the hospital yet recognize the need to connect her with help immediately."

While she was still at her visit with Monticciolo, they completed her initial screening with Charlie Health, got her enrolled in an intensive nine-week program, and adjusted her medications. The patient would receive group and one-on-one therapy several times a week.

The next day, Monticciolo reached out to her patient.

"She was already doing much better. She was relieved she could get help without going to the hospital, which would have caused her to miss work and possibly lose her job, exacerbating the financial difficulties that were a major source of her distress. She loved the therapy program, because she could do it from home," says Monticciolo. "The key to this patient's success was the MI Mind protocol: Every patient, every time."

MACOMB MEDICAL CLINIC, P.C.

FAMILY PRACTICE

THE POWER OF SMALL CHANGES: APPLYING THE CHECKLIST MANIFESTO TO SUICIDE PREVENTION

In The Checklist Manifesto, surgeon and author Atul Gawande makes a compelling case for the power of simple, structured tools in managing complexity. At its core, the book is not just about checklists — it's about how disciplined, incremental improvements can drive meaningful change in high-stakes environments. This philosophy strongly aligns with quality improvement (QI) efforts within MI Mind and, more specifically, with how we approach suicide prevention through Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles.

Suicide prevention is inherently complex. It involves clinical judgment, systems coordination, patient engagement, and timely intervention —all under conditions where consistency is critical. Like the operating rooms Gawande describes, even highly skilled teams can struggle without clear, repeatable processes. Checklists serve as a safeguard, not replacing expertise but supporting it, ensuring that essential steps are consistently followed and that teams can communicate effectively.

This is where the connection to QI and PDSAs becomes especially meaningful. Rather than attempting large-scale changes all at once, QI encourages teams to test small, targeted adjustments in real-world settings. These iterative cycles allow for learning, refinement, and sustainable improvement over time. As Leslie Johnson, BSN, RN, CPHQ, MI Mind Clinical Quality Improvement Lead aptly explains: "This is why we deep dive into PDSAs in MI Mind training. We teach clinicians to test a small change in processes, not only because that is easier, but when you change multiple things at once it's hard to track what is going right and what is going wrong."

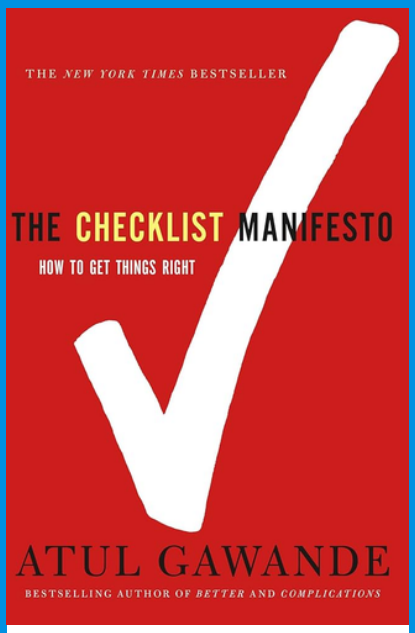
This insight captures a critical principle in both The Checklist Manifesto and QI methodology: clarity comes from simplicity. When teams focus on one change at a time, they gain a clearer understanding of what drives improvement. Small tests reduce risk, make progress more manageable, and provide actionable data that can inform next steps.

In suicide prevention, these small changes can have an outsized impact. For example, introducing a consistent checklist for safety planning, or piloting a new approach to warm handoffs between providers, may seem minor in isolation. However, when tested, measured, and refined through PDSA cycles, these changes can lead to more reliable care and better patient outcomes.

Gawande's work reminds us that excellence is often the result of disciplined attention to detail. It's not always about sweeping transformation — it's about getting the small things right, again and again. In MI Mind's collaborative work, this means creating a culture where teams feel empowered to test new ideas, learn from data, and share insights across organizations.

Ultimately, the intersection of The Checklist Manifesto, QI, and suicide prevention reinforces a hopeful and practical truth: meaningful change is within reach. By embracing structured tools, committing to continuous learning, and focusing on one small improvement at a time, we can make care safer, more consistent, and more effective.

RECOMMENDED READING



The Checklist Manifesto by Atul Gawande explores how simple checklists can improve outcomes in complex, high-stakes environments like healthcare, aviation, and construction. A practicing surgeon, Gawande draws on his clinical experience to highlight how preventable errors often stem from missed steps, not lack of knowledge. He shows how well-designed checklists promote consistency, teamwork, and accountability.

Through real-world examples, he argues that checklists are powerful, low-cost tools that save lives, reduce failure, and help professionals manage growing complexity with clarity and discipline.

One lucky reader will win this book! *Winner will be selected via random drawing from The Mem subscriber list and will be notified by email the week of 06/29/26.*

MI MIND'S YOUTH INITIATIVE BRINGS NEW TEAM MEMBER CARLI SMITH BACK TO MICHIGAN

Carli Smith, LCSW, LMSW, Quality Improvement Lead, MI Mind

This spring, Carli Smith, LCSW, LMSW, joined MI Mind. As a Clinical Quality Improvement Lead, she is spearheading the CQI's Youth Initiative and while it ramps up, she will also assist with the Adult Initiative.

Growing up in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Smith realized at an early age that mental health resources were limited in that area. "I noticed those gaps and how difficult it was for people to access the care they needed. It's how I became interested in the field," she says.

She comes to MI Mind from UCHealth in Aurora, Colorado, where she was the Zero Suicide Program Coordinator as the health system adopted the model. "Colorado has a similar Clinical Quality Improvement model with the state for suicide prevention," she explains.

Returning to Michigan for her "unicorn job" with MI Mind brought her full circle: "I've come back to Michigan where I first became interested in behavioral health and where I was motivated to make it my career. Now I get to have an impact on health systems, including in the community where I was born and raised."

The Youth Initiative is a niche where Smith brings a combination of clinical experience in multiple settings, from residential and school to inpatient psychiatry and hospital emergency departments. She has a background working with children, youth and family systems in behavioral health and in leading CQIs. She aims to leverage her clinical experience to inform system-level improvements that respond to the needs and voices of our youth and communities.

"Risk and protective factors can look different for youth," she reveals. "There are special considerations for interventions that will be tailored to the 12-to-17-year age group. Screening, assessment and interventions each require their own age-appropriate approach. We want to ensure we ask about suicide risk in developmentally appropriate ways so youth understand what we're asking and we can respond with the right level of support." Smith also emphasized the importance of engaging family, school and community systems.

What is most meaningful to her as part of MI Mind is the opportunity to influence system-level change. "People's challenges deserve a coordinated, compassionate response and that starts with strengthening the systems meant to support them. Suicide prevention cannot fall on any one person or organization alone. When systems work together, we can identify risk earlier and respond more effectively," she says. "I hope MI Mind leads a cultural shift and screening for suicide risk becomes the new norm."

Participants can meet her at the Regional Meetings in June and the Collaborative-wide meeting this fall.

Smith has a bachelor's of science degree in psychology from Grand Valley State University and a master's degree in social work from the University of Denver.

FRANKLY SPEAKING: IN ANTICIPATION OF OUR YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION INITIATIVE LAUNCH

Cathrine Frank, M.D.
Co-Director, MI Mind

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for adolescents, and like suicide in adults, it is preventable. Over the coming months, you will hear more about the MI Mind Youth Initiative and our reconceptualization of suicide prevention for this age group.

This work is made even more important due to the long-term benefits of suicide prevention with younger patients. Self-harm at any age up to 16 years is associated with multiple potential adverse outcomes in early adulthood including poorer educational and occupational performance, increase in anxiety, and substance use disorders.

One in five adolescents in the U.S. have a diagnosed mental or behavioral health disorder with up to 40% of high school students reporting persistent feelings of hopelessness or sadness – all risk factors for suicide. When children enter their teens, they may have greater access to firearms and drugs. In addition, due to increased cognitive development, suicide planning may be more possible.

Research supports screening for suicide risk in teens. Tools already familiar to our MI Mind physicians and mental health providers, modified for use in adolescents, will be key to this effort. Our team is currently working to evaluate and select a suicide risk assessment tool and a series of interventions to modify suicide risk in 12- to 17-year-olds. We look forward to sharing more details with you over the coming months and anticipate the Youth Initiative will be ready to launch in the fall of 2027.

WALK WITH MI MIND

If you or your patients are looking for an emotional boost, joining a walk for a cause can improve mental wellness by reducing anxiety, depression and stress. Not only is the physical act of walking beneficial but joining others in a shared purpose increases self-confidence and social connections. As we know, when dopamine is released during exercise, it brightens our outlook, energizes us and builds resilience against anxiety.

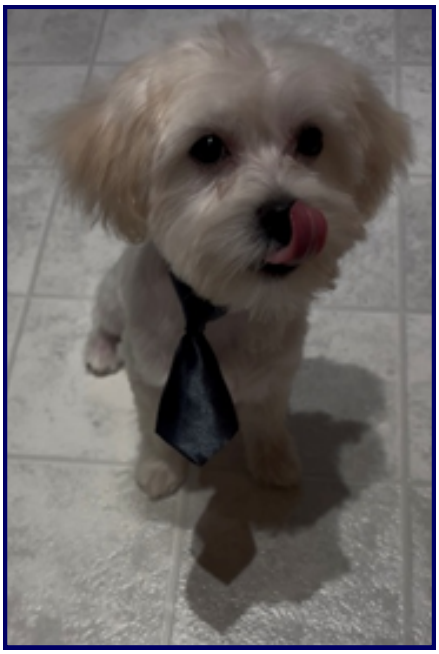
Mark your Calendar for Autumn Walks Supporting Mental Health

MI Mind clinicians, family, and friends are invited to join the MI Mind team for two walks supporting mental illness and suicide awareness and prevention this fall. MI Mind team members will host booths and walk at both events.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Walk Michigan
Saturday, Sept. 19 beginning at 9 a.m.
University of Detroit Mercy
4001 W McNichols Rd., Detroit
Learn more

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Out of the Darkness Walk
Saturday, Sept. 26, check-in begins at 8 a.m., the walk begins at 10 a.m.
Belle Isle in Detroit
Learn more

ERIC ENTERTAINS, MOTIVATES AND EASES THOSE 'RUFF' DAYS



Eric Olajuwon Benton amuses his owner, MI Mind Project Manager Gabbi Benton, by putting his toys at her feet when she works from home.

"He's treated like family, so we gave him a human name," says Gabbi Benton, MSW, MPH, MI Mind Project Manager about her half-Bichon, half-Havanese dog, Eric. "We picked Olajuwon for his middle name because my son and I are big basketball fans, and Hakeem Olajuwon was one of the great all stars of the '80s (see pic below)."

Eric celebrated his first birthday in December 2025. His favorite things are sticking to Gabbi like Velcro, eating peanut butter and being held. "I wasn't prepared for how affectionate Eric would be," says Gabbi. "He's like having a baby. He cries to be picked up and he likes to be rocked to sleep."

Their first dog, Gabbi and her 15-year-old son wanted another companion in the house, and Eric's company has proven beneficial for both of them. Her son came home from school recently and said he'd had a rough day. "He hung out with Eric and took him for a walk, and he said that was helpful," says Gabbi.

With her son past the phase in life where he is excited to see his mom, Gabbi adores Eric's enthusiastic and warm greetings every day. "Having someone who is so excited to see me and be with me makes me feel good. He also motivates me to take him for walks, get fresh air and a little physical exercise, which ultimately improves my mental health. Walking Eric gives me a reason to be outside and a purpose for walking. It's good for both of us."

As her son gets closer to spreading his wings and setting out on his own in adulthood, Gabbi is reassured that Eric will be the key to avoiding "empty nest syndrome."

"When my son goes off to do his own thing, I will still have this little dog to care for and nurture. I can focus my emotional energy on him," she says. Multiple research studies confirm her intuitive planning – pets decrease feelings of loneliness and offer their human caregivers a sense of purpose, reducing depression, anxiety and lifting mood.

"He's always excited to see us – we're his whole world," says Gabbi. "I don't think he knows his name because he's never so far away that I need to call him."

CONTACT US

To reach the MI Mind team, email MIMind@hfhs.org, One Ford Place, Suite 5E, Detroit, MI 48202.

If you have questions or suggestions for *The Mem,* please contact Sr. Marketing Specialist, Jason Robertson, jrober40@hfhs.org.