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## July: Mental Illness Awareness Month

### Creating a Culture of Understanding and Support

July marks Mental Illness Awareness Month in South Africa, an important opportunity to shine a light on mental health challenges that affect millions of people, their families and workplaces. While awareness has grown significantly in recent years, many individuals continue to struggle in silence due to stigma, misunderstanding or uncertainty about where to seek help.

Mental health conditions are among the leading causes of disability worldwide and can affect anyone, regardless of age, profession or background. Anxiety disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and social phobia are all common conditions that can have a significant impact on an individual's quality of life, relationships and work performance if left untreated.

This year's Mental Illness Awareness Month campaign, led by the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), focuses on a different mental health condition each week. The initiative aims to educate the public, encourage open conversations and provide practical tools that help individuals recognise symptoms and seek support early.

For employers, Mental Illness Awareness Month serves as a reminder that workplace wellbeing extends beyond physical health. Employees who feel supported are more likely to seek assistance when they need it, remain engaged at work and maintain healthier coping mechanisms during

periods of stress and uncertainty. Creating psychologically safe workplaces where mental health conversations are encouraged can play a critical role in improving both employee wellbeing and organisational resilience.

Early intervention remains one of the most effective ways to manage mental health conditions. Recognising warning signs, accessing professional support and making use of available healthcare and employee wellbeing resources can help prevent challenges from escalating into more serious concerns.

Throughout July, individuals are encouraged to take advantage of the free resources, online support groups, and expert-led educational sessions offered by SADAG. These initiatives provide valuable guidance for those living with mental health conditions, as well as family members, colleagues and managers who want to better understand and support others.

Mental health is not just a healthcare issue - it is a human issue. By increasing awareness, reducing stigma and fostering a culture of empathy and support, we can help ensure that more people receive the care they need and deserve.

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# Corporate Wellness Week

1 – 5 July 2026

Corporate Wellness Awareness Week, observed from 1 to 5 July 2026, highlights the importance of creating workplace environments that support employee wellbeing. As organisations navigate increasing workplace demands, investing in employee health has become essential to maintaining engagement, productivity and resilience.

Effective wellness programmes take a holistic approach, recognising that employee wellbeing extends beyond physical health. Key focus areas include:

## Physical Wellbeing

- Encouraging regular movement and healthy lifestyle choices.
- Promoting preventative healthcare and health screenings.

## Mental Wellbeing

- Supporting mental health awareness and stress management.
- Providing access to counselling and employee support services.

## Financial Wellbeing

- Offering financial education and retirement planning resources.
- Helping employees build greater financial security.

## Work-Life Balance

- Encouraging healthy boundaries between work and personal life.
- Promoting regular breaks, leave utilisation and flexible work practices where possible.

These elements are closely connected. Challenges in one area can often affect wellbeing in another, making a comprehensive approach to wellness increasingly important.

Corporate Wellness Awareness Week provides an opportunity for employers to reflect on whether their wellbeing initiatives are meeting the evolving needs of their workforce. It is also a reminder that wellness should not be viewed as a once-off campaign, but rather as an ongoing commitment to supporting employees throughout their careers.

The importance of workplace wellbeing is reinforced by Aon's latest Employee Sentiment Study, which found that nearly half of employees believe employers should play a role in supporting their wellbeing. The study also highlights growing expectations around financial education, retirement support and holistic employee benefits, underscoring the need for organisations to take a more comprehensive approach to wellness. As employees increasingly evaluate employers based on the support they provide beyond salary, wellbeing initiatives have become an important factor in attracting, engaging and retaining talent.

Organisations that prioritise employee wellbeing are better positioned to build healthier, more engaged workforces and create sustainable environments where both people and businesses can thrive.

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## World Hepatitis Day

### 28 July 2026

Every year on 28 July, World Hepatitis Day shines a spotlight on one of the world's most overlooked health challenges: viral hepatitis.

Often referred to as a "silent disease", hepatitis can develop without obvious symptoms, leaving many people unaware that they are living with an infection. Yet the impact is significant. Hepatitis B and C affect more than 300 million people globally and are responsible for more than a million deaths each year.

The good news is that hepatitis is both preventable and treatable. Vaccination remains one of the most effective ways to prevent Hepatitis B, while advances in medical treatment mean that Hepatitis C can now be cured in many cases. Early diagnosis and treatment can also help prevent serious complications such as liver damage, cirrhosis and liver cancer.

World Hepatitis Day commemorates the birth anniversary of Dr Baruch Blumberg, the scientist who discovered the Hepatitis B virus and developed the first vaccine against it. His groundbreaking work has helped save millions of lives and continues to support global efforts to eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030.

This year's observance serves as a reminder of the simple actions that can make a difference:

- **Get tested** if you are unsure of your hepatitis status.
- **Get vaccinated** against Hepatitis B and ensure your children are vaccinated.
- **Learn the facts** and help reduce the stigma often associated with the disease.
- **Encourage others** to seek screening and medical advice where appropriate.

By raising awareness, promoting prevention and encouraging early detection, we can help ensure that more people receive the care they need and move closer to a future where viral hepatitis is no longer a major public health threat.

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# References

## Mental Illness Awareness Month

If you or someone you know is struggling, support is available. SADAG's Suicide Crisis Helpline can be reached on 0800 567 567, while additional information, self-assessment tools and support resources are available through SADAG's online platforms: [www.SADAG.org](http://www.SADAG.org)

## World Hepatitis Day

To find out more, please visit:

<https://www.who.int/health-topics/hepatitis>

<https://www.hepb.org/about-us/baruch-blumberg-md-dphil/>

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## Aon Resolution Centre (ARC)

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We are pleased to inform you that Aon has negotiated a favourable underwriting window period with some Gap Cover providers for you and your family. Please contact Aon on **0860 100 404** or [arc@aon.co.za](mailto:arc@aon.co.za) for further information. You may also contact the Aon Resolution Centre should you require a comparison between your current provider and other Gap cover providers.

**This is not a medical scheme and the cover is not the same as that of a medical scheme. This policy is not a substitute for medical scheme membership.**

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