

## Press release

Geneva, 5 June 2023

### Inauguration of the *Maison de l'enfance et de l'adolescence* (Childhood and Adolescence House)

## A NEW APPROACH TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH

The Geneva University Hospital (HUG) have today inaugurated the *Maison de l'enfance et de l'adolescence* (MEA), a psychiatric care center for children and young adults up to the age of 18 and for medical care of adolescents and young adults up to the age of 25. The MEA will welcome its first patient in early July and will be fully operational at the end of August. It unites under one roof care currently provided in 11 different locations within the canton which will greatly improve patient pathways and create significant synergies. Through its innovative concept, the MEA aims to open up psychiatry and have it take its place as part of the city. It is the outcome of an inspiring and generous partnership between the HUG, [Fondation Hans Wilsdorf](#) and [Fondation Children Action](#). Other private donors and legatees have also contributed to the creation of this new care structure.

Infancy, childhood and adolescence are ages of great vulnerability, both from a somatic and psychological perspective. Health problems linked to the evolution of society and to behaviors emerge or are reinforced. These may include behavioral, relationship and communication disorders, substance use, cyberaddictions, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), eating disorders (anorexia nervosa), obesity, self-harm, depression, suicidal thoughts and acts of violence. It is in the face of this reality that the HUG decided to design and build the MEA, a space where children, adolescents, young adults and their parents can feel at ease and receive care, advice and guidance.

Bertrand Levrat, CEO of the HUG explains that “the MEA has been designed as a “*different hospital*”, removing the stigma surrounding psychiatry, set in the heart of the city and open to the young people of Geneva, whether they need medical care or not”.

### A comprehensive healthcare cycle

The MEA offers a comprehensive healthcare cycle, inpatient care, hospital daycare and outpatient consultations for childhood and adolescent mental health issues and medical care for adolescents and young adults. It unites all consultation and hospitalization units to create more seamless care pathways for young patients. The proximity between all the relevant professional staff will galvanize teams and multiply synergies.

The MEA is organized around four activity poles:

- Outpatient and inpatient units of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (SPEA), consisting of the [Infant/Child Guidance Unit](#), the [ALiNEA Unit](#), [MEME Consultation](#), the [Hospital Outpatient Liaison Unit](#) (ULAH), the Hospitalization Unit and Crisis Unit [MALATAVIE](#), in partnership with Children Action;
- Outpatient consultation care for adolescents and young adults (CASAA) and the [Health and Movement Consultation](#) intended for young people who suffer from excess weight or obesity;
- Research into child psychiatry and in adolescent medicine;
- Pre/postgraduate teaching for professionals and medical and nursing professionals.

Therapeutic mediation consisting of workshops focusing on a specific subject (e.g. drawing, play, painting) or an activity (dance, music, cooking, radio, etc) is an integral part of the care plans offered to MEA patients.

The new organization of these clinical and research activities has been placed under the leadership of Doctor Nathalie Nanzer, Head (ad interim) of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Professor Klara Posfay-Barbe, Head of the Division of General Pediatrics.

### **A new approach to mental health between medicine, culture and physical activity**

In the broadest sense, psychiatric illness constitutes a breakdown in the ties between the individual and his or her environment. It is based on this that contemporary psychiatry defines itself as being part of society, with no stigma attached and connected to its environment.

In the design of this “*different hospital*” the ground floor is entirely dedicated to the arts, science, cinema, music and physical activities. Exhibitions, workshops and conferences will also be organized. The [Bioscope](#), a public laboratory of life sciences and biomedical sciences of the University of Geneva will be present at the MEA and will host sessions and exhibitions. Workshops on biodiversity, health, genetics or even neurosciences will be open to Geneva schools, from primary to college level.

The MEA includes a multipurpose sports hall whose sports equipment has been financed by the [Laver Cup Organization](#). Taking part in physical activity is recognized as having a beneficial impact on the mental health of children and adolescents. The MEA also has a performance hall, a projection room and a dance and music room. A radio studio and a kitchen laboratory complete the facilities.

These cultural, educational and social activities, ensuring the link to the city, will be organized by [Artopie](#) and [Fondation Convergences](#), in partnership with the medical and nursing teams.

### **Sustainability and comfort**

The MEA has about 25 beds in comfortable, tastefully designed rooms. The building also has a large garden and a terrace connected to the cafeteria, a vegetable garden and a play area, as might have a large house. The use of wood is noticeable throughout and creates a supportive environment for psychological treatment.

At the suggestion of the children and adolescents involved in the interactive consultations, a large part of the furniture at the MEA has been recycled from the [Re-sources](#) platform of the *Services industriels de Genève* (SIG).

### **The building and the budget**

The MEA building was designed and built by the Geneva-based firm [CLR architectes](#). It is six storeys high, plus a ground floor and basement, and has a total surface area of 14,600 m<sup>2</sup>.

The MEA is the outcome of an inspiring and generous partnership between the HUG, [Fondation Hans Wilsdorf](#) and [Fondation Children Action](#). The budget for construction, internal fittings and land rights amounted to CHF 82 million.

The public will be able to visit the MEA, during an open day, on Saturday June 10, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. More information on the [HUG website](#).

**To find out more, please consult the [press pack](#) (in French).**

**[Photos](#) are also available. If you wish to receive them in HD, contact us.**

### **For further information:**

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#### **The HUG: Care, Teaching, and leading-edge Research**

The Geneva University Hospital (HUG) comprises [eight public hospitals and two clinics](#). Their missions are to provide health care to the community in all medical specialties, to help train physicians and health professionals, and to conduct medical and clinical research. The HUG operate as a national reference centre for [influenza](#), [emerging viral infections](#), [meningococcus](#), and transplant immunology, and are the [national reference laboratory for histocompatibility](#). They are also a WHO Collaborating Centre [in six areas](#), as well as [Centres of Excellence](#) in a number of sectors. The HUG treat 260,000 patients each year, with a capacity of 2,000 hospital beds, and employ 12.788 people.

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