

Message from Issue Editor



Positive Mental Health

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The theme of the current issue is on “Positive Mental Health” (PMH). Unlike a specific mental illness or a specific age group, we may have different understanding of what the topic refers to. This probably reflects the growing model building, field practice and research work related to our chosen theme. In this issue, we have taken a broad definition of PMH which includes both positive psychology and the traditional 3-tier model of mental health promotion.

Our long-held model on mental health promotion is tilted towards illness prevention. With the advancement in positive psychology since its professional movement publicly proposed by Martin Seligman in 1998, the inclusion of positive psychology findings to enhance the effectiveness of traditional mental health promotion work is an intriguing question both from a theoretical and practice point of view. In this issue, an attempt to answer this question has been put forth in the paper entitled “Mental Health Promotion: Challenges, Opportunities and Future Directions” by Yip et al.

The study on mental wellness, such as subjective well-being, has a history dated back long before the positive psychology movement (Diener et al, 1999). However, in recent decade, the research and practice of positive psychology have made great strides with a focus on the scientific study of “happiness”.

However, the equivalence of positive psychology to a study on happiness has been subjected to criticisms and challenges. In his recent work, Seligman has changed his theoretical stand from “Authentic Happiness” to “Well-being” which covers not only positive emotion (i.e. happiness) but also engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement (Seligman, 2011). In this issue, Dr. Anthony Tong, a well-known local advocate of positive psychology has discussed eloquently in his paper the importance of going beyond the search for happiness and get into life meanings and goals in order to achieve a flourished life. In regard to the research aspect of positive psychology, we are fortunate to have a paper by a local prominent scholar Dr. Samuel Ho and his team. Their research is on “virtues and life satisfaction” using Hong Kong and Mainland China subjects. The study has nicely illustrated the importance of understanding and evaluating positive psychology constructs within a cultural context.

Our inclusive view on PMH is incomplete without discussion on mental health promotion and illness prevention. In this regard, works targeting at children and adolescents deserve special mention because of their probable long-standing value. For primary prevention, we have a paper by Lee et al. describing a school-based mental health awareness programme which succeeded in improving participants’ mental health knowledge and

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reducing stigmatizing towards people with mental illness. On secondary prevention, early successful preventive work for children with anxiety using a community and school-based approach has been documented in the paper by Wong et al. Both papers have succinctly illustrated our growing attention to and awareness of the importance of sustaining local work on different levels of mental health promotion.

Last but not the least, we are honored to have an extraction paper on the 2012 World Mental Health Day, a global campaign initiated by the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) of which Ms. Deborah Wan is its current President. This year marked the 20th anniversary of the World Mental Day and a timely theme, depression, has been chosen for global awareness. The

extraction paper has contributions from different prominent authors describing the history of the World Mental Health Day as well as an appeal for actions.

I believe the six papers in this issue have illustrated not only the wide spectrum and fast growth of PMH but they also provide a glimpse into our local flourishing development in this area. I hope this issue would serve as a fruitful stimulation to all our readers.

References:

- Diener, E., Suh, E.M., Lucas, R.E. and Smith, H.L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125, 276-302.
- Seligman, M.E.P. (2011). *Flourish, A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. Free Press, New York.