

Mental Health for All

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Abstract

The burden of mental disorders globally is substantial, impacting society through heavy number of years lived with disability for individuals with mental disorder. Hong Kong has developed a robust mental health care system focusing on treatment, rehabilitation prevention practices and mental wellbeing promotion. Evolving from custodial care to community-based programs, Hong Kong offers services like community support and early intervention to address mental health needs. Emphasizing mental wellbeing promotion alongside mental disorder prevention underscores the benefits of cultivating the former, which can prevent disorders, aid recovery, and enhance overall functioning. Resilience-building interventions are vital for supporting individuals and caregivers facing challenges. The Mental Health Association of Hong Kong provides a wide network of community care services, emphasizing prevention through mental health literacy programs and early interventions in community. Strengthening mental health services, addressing gaps, and promoting mental health across various sectors are critical for creating a mental health friendly society. The Association's 70th Anniversary Symposium on Mental Health in Hong Kong will explore mental wellness in fostering a supportive environment for mental health.

Keywords: Mental Health Service, Mental Wellbeing Promotion, Community Mental Health Network

Mental disorders are responsible for about a third of the global disease burden. The global proportion of disease burden due to mental disorders as measured by years lived with a disability is 18% overall and 45% for 10-24-year-olds. Furthermore, the global burden due to mental and substance use disorder, as measured by disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs), increased by 38% between 1990 and 2010. The high prevalence of mental disorders, the broad range of impacts of mental disorders, most lifetime mental disorders arise before adulthood, and the low coverage of interventions to treat mental disorders, prevent associated impacts, and prevent mental disorders from arising account for the large impact of mental disorders in society (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2021).

Against this global landscape of mental disorders, mental health services in Hong Kong have developed into a territory-wide comprehensive system of treatment and care. The comprehensive Mental Health Services serve to treat mental disorders, prevent associated impacts, and, to a lesser extent, prevent mental disorders from arising, promote mental well-being and resilience in Hong Kong. The treatment services for mental disorders have come a long way since the enactment of the Mental Health Ordinance (Cap 136) in the early 1960s. It has migrated from a custodial approach over the past decades to community-based recovery services (Honyashiki et al., 2023).

The implementation of a series of community-

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based rehabilitation programmes covering residential, vocational and recovery needs of discharged patients has been successfully implemented throughout the past 70 years of service development of The Mental Health Association of Hong Kong. The community recovery services serve to alleviate the multi-faceted impacts of mental disorders in an individual affected by mental disorders (Ho et al., 2010). In order to prevent mental disorders from arising, early intervention services have been rolled out in a territory-wide manner in Hong Kong to help explore effective interventions for early treatment and secondary and tertiary prevention of psychosis (Chen et al., 2019). The articulation of mental health literacy through Mental Health First Aid training to the general public and the development of school-based youth mental health awareness programmes are among the many valuable experiences of pilot mental health prevention practice (Wong et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2012). Promotion of mental health and mental wellbeing as well as resilience by adopting a population-based approach across the life span have been piloted in Hong Kong. It serves to identify effective means of primary prevention of mental disorders and to realise better mental health and mental wellbeing in society, hence lowering the disease burden related to mental disorders.

Mental Wellbeing and Mental Disorders

Mental wellbeing as defined by WHO in 2001,

is a state in which “the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (WHO, 2021). It has several constituents, including satisfaction, pleasure, relationships, engagement, meaning and purpose. There are many health benefits of mental wellbeing. It includes reduced mental disorders in children and adolescents, reduced adult mental disorders and suicide, reduced misbehaviors such as smoking, alcohol, and substance use, also reduced heart disease, improved recovery from physical illness, and reduced mortality. Social benefits include stronger social relationships, increased social and community participation, increased likelihood of marriage, and reduced marital separation. Improved education outcomes, employment outcomes with increased productivity at work, fewer missed days of work and higher income, reduced crime and violence, and improved resilience are among other associated positive impacts.

Mental disorders and wellbeing co-exist on two related but distinct continua. Mental wellbeing is not the absence of mental disorders, it is the summative degree of emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. For prevention in psychiatry, the independence of mental wellbeing reframes perspectives of mental health care and it is an unexplored territory for health promotion (Figure 1).

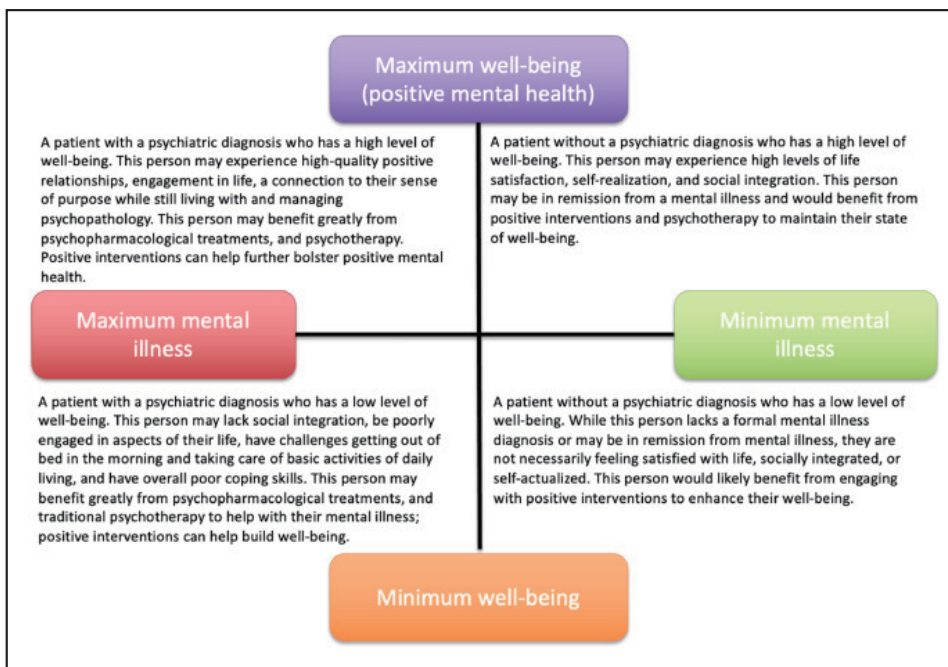


Figure 1: The two continua model of mental health

Mental Health for All

Mental wellbeing is independently important for mental and physical health. It improves functions for individuals regardless of the presence or absence of a mental disorder. Cultivating mental wellbeing can alleviate symptoms of mental disorders and strengthen recovery for individuals with depression, eating disorders, and schizophrenia. After all, the ability to work and carry out activities of daily living matters to mitigate the economic and human costs of poor mental health. Nevertheless, there is a growing body of evidence showing high levels of mental wellbeing can prevent some mental disorders altogether. Thus, cultivating mental wellbeing offers an opportunity for primary prevention of mental disorders, to improve function in case of known mental disorders, prevention of relapse and strengthen recovery for individuals with long-term mental disorders (Doyle et al., 2023).

Resilience in Caregiving

Resilience involves negotiation, management, and adaptation to adversity, including poverty, parent loss, maltreatment, and war. Levels of resilience are lowered for those with anxiety or depression. Interventions that promote resilience can also promote mental wellbeing, prevent mental disorders, and support recovery from mental disorders. Being caregivers of an individual with mental disorders and/or physical illness is always a challenging task. Development of appropriate resilience promotion can certainly help secure good outcomes in mental wellbeing and mental health (Table 1).

Promotion of Mental Wellbeing Across Life Span

The Mental Health Association of Hong Kong was founded by a group of professionals working in

the mental health field in 1954. The Association runs the first community half-way house for discharged patients from 1967 in Hong Kong. After years of organizing public mental health education, including the first-ever Mental Health Week from 1959, the Association hosted the 24th International Congress of the World Federation for Mental Health in Hong Kong in 1971, and established the Hong Kong Journal of Mental Health in 1972, the first thematic journal of mental health in Hong Kong. Thereafter, the Association built a comprehensive community mental health care network with residential services, vocational rehabilitation for ex-mentally ill and individuals with learning disabilities. We also run a special school for mental handicaps children from 1980. The special school was renamed Cornwall School and removed to a purpose-built premises in 2009. MentalCare Connect, a social enterprise to secure employment opportunities for disabled employees was set up in 2002 and Institute of Community Rehabilitation was established in 2010 to share professional knowledge on community rehabilitation with our Mainland counterparts. The same year marked the inception of Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness as well as the setting up of the self-financed T.N. Foo Centre for Positive Mental Health. The former initiative adopts a community recovery model for individuals with mental disorders or mental disabilities, a secondary and tertiary prevention practice in Mental Health. The latter initiative organized a territory-wide mental health literacy programme using Mental Health First Aid training for the general public, a primary prevention practice in Mental Health.

Given the growing evidence on the effectiveness of mental wellbeing promotion, the Association participates in a number of innovative public mental health intervention projects to different target population groups across the life span in recent years. The following are funded projects in mental wellbeing

Table 1.
Public mental health interventions (Campion, 2019)

Mental disorders prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Primary prevention: addresses risk factors to prevent mental disorders from arising ● Secondary level: early intervention for mental disorders and associated impacts as soon as they arise ● Tertiary level: intervention for those with established mental disorders to prevent relapse and associated impacts outlined earlier
Mental well-being promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Primary level: promotion of protective factors for mental well-being ● Secondary level: early promotion in those with recent deterioration in mental well-being ● Tertiary level: promotion in those with existing and or longstanding poor mental well-being
Resilience promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Primary level: promotion of resilience ● Secondary level: early promotion of resilience in those with recent adversity ● Tertiary level: promotion of resilience in those with past or longstanding adversity

promotion launched successfully by The Mental Health Association of Hong Kong in recent years (Table 2).

Way Forward

The Mental Health Association in Hong Kong was set up 70 years ago with an objective to better the mental health of the Hong Kong population. Our core service in the care and support of individuals with mental disorders and learning disabilities includes the development of residential services, vocational rehabilitation, community case management, and public mental health education. Over the past 70 years, we have built a comprehensive community mental health care network in line with government rehabilitation policy. The emerging evidence in prevention practice has driven a number of pilot upstream projects in relapse prevention of ex-mentally ill, in enhancing mental health literacy to the general public and specific intervention programme to cultivate mental wellbeing among at risk target populations. In order to harness the benefits of pilot public mental health intervention, to create synergy among our core services, and to achieve sustainable population impacts, improved implementations of prevention practices need to be considered in both short term and long term.

The core service network of the Association has to be strengthened and further developed. The unmet need in community mental health and service gaps in the existing community services need to be addressed. The rehabilitation programme plan, a government document in rehabilitation, has recently been updated to acknowledge better the capacity issues in supporting the recovery of individuals with mental disorders and care of individuals with learning disabilities. The levels of unmet need in mental health and organization of rehabilitation services actually vary in different countries, regions and locations. A robust mechanism to formulate, coordinate and implement mental health friendly policy is mandatory

for effective provision of mental health services with desirable outcomes. The assessment of mental health needs and development of the mental health workforce by tertiary institutes and professional bodies, the design and planning of appropriate relevant initiatives with built-in process and outcome indicators by respective government departments, the effective engagement of suitable services providers, the use of social capitals in furtherance of population mental health are among the essential tasks of a good central coordination.

Prevention of mental health disorders from arising and promotion of mental well-being are possible upstream solutions in containing the disease burden of mental disorders. Improving population knowledge about mental health is the first step to facilitating recognition of mental disorders, beliefs about treatment, reductions in stigma, and increased help-seeking among the general public. Based on recent epidemiological studies in mental health in Hong Kong, a large proportion of our population has lived experience of mental disorders. Adopting a setting-based approach, namely in workplace, schools, and community service units can achieve wider and in-depth coverage of mental health literacy programme. In addition to the anticipated mental health benefits, enhanced mental health literacy in general public may serve well also to enable early intervention by primary mental health care and secondary mental health treatment services.

The mental health prevention practices for different target populations can be integrated within and between different sectors or settings. Promotion of mental well-being across the life span can secure health benefits at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels for children and youth, adult, and old age persons. The upcoming 70th Anniversary Symposium on Mental Health carries a theme on “Flourishing Mental Wellness Across the Life Span”. A wealth of overseas and local experiences on youth mental

Table 2.
Mental Well-being Promotion

Starting well	- Jockey Club ‘BaMa Chill Club’ Perinatal Support Project
Developing well	- Chill Lab - Youth Mental Health Project
	- Jockey Club Embrace Life Series 2.0 – Quality Mental Health Campus Project
Living well	- Good Enough Carer Companionship Project
	- Jockey Club Community Integration Project for Mental Recovery
	- Jockey Club Men's Space
	- Jockey Club Sleep Well Project
	- Mental Health First Aid Training
Working well	- Corporate Mental Health Training Programme
Ageing well	- JC JoyAge – Jockey Club Holistic Support Project for Elderly Mental Wellness

health, adult mental health, mental health of old age, and mental health in caregiving would be shared. A wide range of professional backgrounds namely, academics, policy maker, psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, psychiatric nurse, occupational therapist, and social worker are here to present their valuable messages on prevention practices in Mental Health among different target populations across the life span. Hopefully, all symposium participants can take home updated knowledge and useful references for building a mental health friendly society in Hong Kong and beyond.

摘要

精神健康 全民共享

世界衛生組織報告全球精神疾病負擔沉重，患有精神疾病人士因其長期病患而對社會帶來重大影響。香港過去發展全面的精神健康服務系統，著重治療、康復、預防和精神健康推廣。從監護治療轉型至社區為本的期間，香港發展不同的社區支援和早期介入服務，應對精神健康需求。精神健康推廣與精神疾病預防同樣重要，促進前者的好處包括可預防疾病、促進康復，及增強整體功能。另韌性的培育對支持個人和照顧者面對挑戰至為重要。香港心理衛生會現時提供廣泛的社區精神健康網絡服務，並透過精神健康推廣計劃和社區早期介入來加強預防。加強精神健康服務、解決服務空隙，並在各個領域促進精神健康對能打造一個精神健康友善社會至為關鍵。香港心理衛生會70周年研討會將探討如何在香港以至海外建構支援性環境以促進精神健康。

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