

Message from Issue Editor



“Child and Youth Mental Health”

Raymond W S Chan

This is the second issue of the Journal after its activation in the winter of 2008. For the current issue, the Editorial Board has chosen a very timely and important theme – “Child and Youth Mental Health”. Recent repeated episodes of youth consuming Ketamine in public have once again raised our ongoing concerns to the mental health of our younger generation to a historical height. Drug abuse is only one of the many mental problems that youth has to face. There are fourteen mental disorders with onset in infancy/childhood listed in DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The point prevalence of childhood disorders is documented in the range of 10 to 15%. Given the widespread of the childhood mental problems, it is impossible to have a comprehensive coverage on the subject in a single journal issue. For the current issue, we have chosen to report on some of the most updated local researches on Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention-deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and the impact of physical activity on mental health.

Childhood autism is a serious developmental disorder with an increasing prevalence. The most recent published estimate is about 1 in 150 children (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007). As a spectrum disorder, classical cases of autism are relatively easy to be detected. However, this is not the situation for cases with high-functioning. Oftentimes, they are not being referred until some emergencies arise. As a first step to address this problem, there is an urgent need to develop a valid and reliable

screening tool for local school children. In this issue, the paper by Patsy Wong et al. has reported an encouraging preliminary result of validating a screening questionnaire, Autism-spectrum Quotient, Child Version (AQ-Child) in Hong Kong. Apart from screening and diagnosing, treatment of ASD is also a big challenge. Though a number of methods have been claimed to be helpful to ASD, many are not evidence-based. The search for effective treatments is always a grave concern not only to parents but professionals as well. The paper by Professor Kathy Lee and her group is an exemplary effort to address this concern. Their study has demonstrated the effectiveness of Social Thinking training in improving the communicative function of high-functioning autistic students studying in secondary schools.

In our schools, about 6% of the children have ADHD (Leung et al, 1996). Despite its obvious behavioural manifestations, the neurocognitive profile of the disorder remains speculative. Medication has proven to be an effective treatment for ADHD. However, the search for non-medical interventions has never stopped. This is because about 30% of ADHD cases are not responsive to drug treatment and some parents prefer psychosocial rather than pharmacological intervention. The study by He & Chan is an attempt to elucidate the relationship between working memory and ADHD and whether improving the former would lead to the same change in the latter.

Our understanding of child and adolescent mental health is lopsided if we focus only

on the illness but not the wellness domain. To make the picture complete, we have an excellent article on physical activity and mental health. Physical activity is always heeded as a useful adjunct for mental health; however, its exact contribution remains to be clarified. In the study jointly conducted by Hong Kong Baptist University and the Mental Health Association of Hong Kong under the leadership of Dr. W.C. Lau, interesting findings in the relationship between physical activity and mental health in the young and adult populations in Hong Kong have been highlighted.

Last but not the least, we have an article that deserves our equal if not more attention though it is not directly related to the current theme of this issue. The speech by Professor Dinesh Bhugra on “Migration and Mental Health” at the recent 18th Professor Yap Pow-meng Memorial Lecture has reminded us again the importance of cultural factors in understanding mental illness. As Hong Kong has become increasingly cosmopolitan and a hub for Mainland immigrants, Professor Bhugra’s exposition of schizophrenia and

attempted suicide within the context of migration has much relevance to our services to the mentally ill in Hong Kong.

I would like to thank the authors, the Editorial Board and the staff of The Mental Health Association of Hong Kong in joining hands to produce this issue. I hope the readers would have a happy and thought-stimulating reading.

References

- American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – DSM-IV-TR*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (2007). Prevalence of autism spectrum disorders – autism and developmental disabilities monitoring network, 14 sites, United States, 2002. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 56, No.SS-1, 12-28.
- Leung, P., Luk, S.L., Ho, T.P., Taylor E., Lieh Mak F., Bacon-Shone, J. (1996). The diagnosis and prevalence of hyperactivity in Chinese schoolboys. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 168, 486-496.

Upcoming Themes

The Hong Kong Journal of Mental Health is the official publication of The Mental Health Association of Hong Kong and is published on a half-yearly basis. It is an interdisciplinary journal intended to serve as a focal point for exchange to enhance the definition and development of the field of mental health and to facilitate the application of facts, principles, and methods derived from psychiatry, psychology, medicine, sociology, epidemiology, anthropology, social work, nursing, education and other health-related disciplines.

The Editorial Board has suggested several upcoming themes including (but not limited to) the followings:

- ◆ Community Care of Mental Illness
- ◆ Elderly Mental Health
- ◆ Family Mental Health
- ◆ Mental Health Promotion

Manuscript submission should be sent to
Mr. Stephen Y K Sun
Chief Editor, Hong Kong Journal of Mental Health
c/o The Mental Health Association of Hong Kong
2 Kung Lok Road, Kwun Tong, Kowloon, Hong Kong, China
E-mail: mhahkho@mhahk.org.hk