

## *Message from Issue Editor*



### **Healthy Ageing**

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With the much lengthened life expectancy, and declining fertility in many Asian countries, it is expected that the majority of the world's older adults will be living in Asia in the 21st century (Chan, 2011). The ageing of "baby-boomers" (people born between 1946-1964) is an epochal moment in the global history of ageing, as no other generation has had so many people growing old at the same time (Kua, 2012). Hong Kong has one of the world's lowest birth rates-0.9 per woman of child-bearing age, far below the replacement rate of 2.1. It is estimated that 26.8% of the population will be aged 65 or more in the year 2033. The continuously growing older population is a huge challenge to Hong Kong and other parts of the world. Literature in the past focused more on the negative aspects of ageing, for example, the commonly used term "silver tsunami" has brought feeling of being "loaded and strained" (Kua, 2012). It is the time now for us to address healthy ageing, with the aim of promoting well-being for older adults.

Ageing is a multidimensional and complex process. People experience a number of transitions over their life course that impact their social networks, health and participation in the community and the economy. Ageing could be positively defined as a process of optimising opportunities for physical, social and mental health to enable older people to take an active part in society

without discrimination and to enjoy an independent and good quality of life (The Swedish National Institute of Public Health, 2006). A health approach to ageing focuses on recognising older adults as valuable members of society, who contribute a diversity of skills, knowledge and experiences to their families and communities. This approach works to promote an appreciation of the different needs, abilities, and contributions of individuals as they progress through their senior years (National Seniors Council, 2012).

A health approach to ageing will benefit the older adults and the society. For older adults, an active and healthy lifestyle can prolong independence, extend participation in the labour force and the community, help manage chronic illnesses and prevent poor health. Healthy and active ageing also has a positive impact on society. Older adults play an important role in the economy through participation in the workforce and as consumers. Older adults also make a significant contribution to the community through volunteer work and support to family and others (National Seniors Council, 2012).

Healthy ageing requires an environment that is age-friendly and where older adults have access to programs and services that fulfill their needs and interests (National Seniors Council, 2012). Healthcare professionals need to increase their knowledge

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about how to promote good health among older people so as to promote health and quality in later life stages and to prevent costly and negative impacts effects on the population as a whole. They need to be familiar with evidence and good practice in healthy ageing. Policy making needs to make decision based on research and good practice (The Swedish National Institute of Public Health, 2006).

In this issue, we have papers from Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, and Finland addressing the bio-psychosocial aspects of healthy ageing. The authors of these papers include clinicians, academics, researchers and policy makers. I hope you will enjoy reading this issue.

I hope the *Hong Kong Journal of Mental Health* will be your choice for publishing your scholarly work. The Editorial Board members encourage you to share your experience, thoughts and knowledge in the Journal. We also welcome your feedback and suggestions.

## References

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