

Message from Issue Editor



Promoting positive ageing

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Ageing population is a well recognised global issue and Asian countries are particularly affected. In Hong Kong, it is estimated that by 2041, nearly one in every three of the population will be aged 65 or above (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2014). Traditionally, ageing is associated with decline in physical and mental functions, problems and inconvenience. However, in developed countries, there is a move from this deficit view of ageing to 'New Ageing' which focuses on older people's resiliencies, health, well-being as well as resources and skills that they have (Gergen & Gergen, 2000). The ageing population presents great opportunities and benefits for the society, rather than a problem. This positive focus will require a profound shift in society's mind set about ageing. It also brings significant insight to healthcare practices leading to a shift from repair and prevention to create hope, empowerment and growth-enhancing activities among older people (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012; Gergen & Gergen, 2000).

In many countries, positive ageing and agenda have been well established for more than a decade. For example, a recent report from Australia highlighted the need to take a fresh approach in reducing age discrimination in communities so that older people can stay in the workforce if they wish; encourage lifelong learning and active ageing; improve health and housing to enable older people to maintain independence, and reduce isolation and disengagement (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012).

In Hong Kong, the recent policy address brought up the idea of ageing in place, instead of being institutionalised. It proposed providing additional resources to elderly centres in local communities; enhancing support service to elderly persons with dementia and their carers; implementing a pilot scheme of providing living allowance to carers for the elderly; rolling out Senior Policy Call programme; injecting HK\$50 million into the Elder Academy Development Foundation; and regularising the District-based Scheme on Carer Training (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2014). The outcomes of these policy directions in Hong Kong have yet to be seen. Given the paucity of publicly accessible evidence for policy development and evaluation, positive ageing appears to be an under-researched area in Hong Kong. This could have limited the evaluation of effectiveness of policy development as well as implementation.

Investment designated to ageing research is essential for evidence-informed policy making. For reference, the Australia government committed a sum of AUD\$9.1 million (about HK\$63 million) in 2012 for aged care and evaluation research. It is hoped that both the older people receiving services and service providers in Australia are well informed in making decisions (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012). This could be a good lesson for Hong Kong to learn.

In this issue, we present discussion and research papers from Hong Kong, Singapore

and Australia. These research studies focus on community- dwelling older adults, older adults who live alone, and those who live in residential care setting. Patterns of ageing and their implications to health policy are complex and differ due to the uniqueness of local communities. Culturally appropriate and feasible interventions could be developed to promote positive ageing. The papers in this issue help us understand the experiences of different groups of older adults in different settings and countries, and offer sound aspirations for promoting positive ageing.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue, and wish the Hong Kong Journal of Mental Health becomes your choice of publishing your scholarly work and sharing your experience

with our readers. We welcome manuscripts on discussion, literature review and research. The Editorial Board also welcomes your feedback and suggestions.

References

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