

## **Mental Health Week 1982 Open Session - Speech of Welcome**

**W H Lo**

Vice President, The Mental Health Association of Hong Kong

The Honorable Secretary for Social Services, Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to welcome you all to this opening ceremony of the Mental Health Week, 1982. Prof. Gerald Choa, President of the Mental Health Association of Hong Kong can't be with us here this morning and as Vice-President I have been asked to stand in on his behalf. We are proud that our Association has since 1959 organized 5 mental health weeks and in his printed handout Prof. Choa has pointed out that attention should be paid to educating the public on the preventive aspect of mental illness. To this I wish to say a few words.

Prevention embraces three functional components, namely primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary prevention attempts to promote mental health and reduce the number of people who would for the first time develop psychiatric symptoms and illness. Secondary prevention aims at shortening the duration of illness by active treatment and tertiary prevention tries to minimize the consequence of illness by rehabilitation.

In secondary prevention we should have enough psychiatric facilities and manpower to render a high quality of patient-care but education can enlighten the general public on early detection and intervention of illness.

In tertiary prevention it is not enough just to provide after-care services. We have to change the attitude of the public by educating them to be more tolerant and less fearful towards discharged mental patients thus facilitating their return to the community. However, the focus of mental health education should really be on primary prevention. Mental health means very much more than the absence of mental illness. It is best conceived as optimal life functioning in the sense that an individual is able to utilize fully his potentials and adapt well to the ever changing society and live harmoniously with others. This is an ideal situation each and everyone of us is striving to achieve.

Cultivation of mental health does not necessarily involve high-sounding principles but should start early in childhood and therefore much depends on the understanding and attitude of parents and teachers. In this respect this year's theme 'Mental Health and Education' is of particular interest and talks to be given by many experts will no doubt be of great help to all concerned.

In concluding I think you would like me to thank the Chairman and other Members of the Organizing Committee for their hardwork and the Rotary Club of Peninsula for their generous support, and join me in wishing this Week every success.

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Source: W H Lo (1982). In T P Khoo (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Fifth Mental Health Week*, Hong Kong: 5 – 11 June, 1982 (pp. 11).