

**MENTAL HEALTH IN HONG KONG
SERIOUSNESS OF CURRENT
PROBLEMS AND EFFECTIVENESS
OF PUBLIC POLICIES**

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GLOBAL SCENE: ACCORDING TO WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO)

- + 450 million people worldwide have a mental or neurological disorder, of whom
- + 150 million suffer from depression, 25 million have schizophrenia, 90 million have a drug or alcohol dependency.
- + 15% to 25% of the population are estimated to have mental disorder. 1% to 3% of the total population suffer from severe mental illness.

LOCAL SCENE: HONG KONG

+ With a population of 6.9 million, an estimate of 1 million to 1.7 million have a mental disorder and an estimate of 70,000 – 200,000 persons suffer from severe mental illness. There are around 40,000 diagnosed schizophrenia patients, 38,000 of affective disorders (depression & bipolar), 32,000 who are diagnosed to have neurotic, stress-related and somatoform disorders, 8,000 diagnosed to have dementia.

+ Source: HA Mental Health Service Plan for Adults 2010-2015

WHAT IS SCHIZOPHRENIA ?

- + A severe mental illness with paranoid, often hearing voices. Delusion, fixed delusion, being persecuted or oppressed.
- + Adolescent of 15 and above will suffer from this disease and it often occurs between the age of 15-35.
- + Cause: inherited from family, brain damage, drug induced psychosis, severe stress

WHAT IS DEPRESSION ?

- + Depression is a disorder of the brain. The exact cause of the disease is unknown, but it is thought to be a combination of genetics and life experiences. There is no cure for the disorder, but there are effective treatments, including medications and talk therapy.
- + Signs and symptoms: Persistent sad, feelings of hopelessness, pessimism, feeling of guilt, loss of interest in hobbies, decreased energy, thought of death or suicide, restlessness, irritability, etc
- + Source: Depression: What you know can help you, WFMH packet, www.wfmh.org

VIOLENCE ASSOCIATED WITH SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS:

- + Some mental disordered persons due to paranoid or delusional thoughts hurt themselves more than hurting others. From the past records of the discharged schizophrenia who live in the community, only 1% or less committed violent crimes. Ordinary persons committed more violent crimes.
- + Those who have a record or history of violent behaviour will be closely monitored by the healthcare professionals and conditions will be set for discharging them from hospital.

SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM OF MENTAL HEALTH IN HONG KONG:

- + Mental Health policy is not yet promulgated, although in the process of drafting
- + Inadequacy of community services' provisions, manpower etc
- + Inadequate legal provision for compulsory community treatment, lack of community treatment order

SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM OF MENTAL HEALTH IN HONG KONG:

- + Inadequate support for caregivers of severe mentally ill
- + Prejudice and stigma against mental illness & ignorance about mental health
- + Inadequate public education on mental health, promotion and prevention strategies are not well planned and co-ordinated

EXISTING SERVICES' FACED

THE PROBLEMS:

- + Increase of inpatients from 13,816 in 2003/04 to 15,887 in 2008/09 (HA)
- + Increase of specialist outpatient services. In 2008/09, 26,747 new patients with a total of 647,864 attendances, 19% increase since 2003/04 (HA)
- + Increase of community psychiatric service, outreach service from 81,230 in 2003/4 to 104,753 in 2008/09 and psychogeriatric outreach service from 41,502 in 2003/04 to 66,617 in 2008/09 (HA)

EXISTING SERVICES' FACED THE PROBLEMS:

- + Community rehabilitation services are unable to find premises for new Wellness Centres, residential services for discharged mental patients
- + Inadequacy of trained manpower, including psychiatrist, social workers, psychiatric nurses, occupational therapists and even front-line care workers

NEW MEASURES ADOPTED IN THE PAST YEARS INITIATED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND THE SECTORS:

- + Reduction of hospital beds and increase of community services, outreaching to patients
- + The adoption of case management for severe mentally ill as to follow-up their medical and social needs
- + Persons with severe mental illness continue receive specialist outpatient services
- + Persons with common mental disorder will be treated in family clinics
- + Wellness Centre for all – a one-stop service for the local community on mental well-being

HURDLES OF IMPLEMENTING THE ABOVE MEASURES:

- + Change of mindset from institutional care to community care
- + Insufficient pre & post service training for frontline staff
- + Mental health service is the least priority chosen by allied professionals
- + Family doctors are not willing to treat persons with common mental disorder
- + Lack of commitment from newer generation of staff in serving the mentally ill
- + Negative perception of services for mentally ill

- + The government did put in additional resources for both Hospital Authority (HA) and the rehabilitation sectors under the Social Welfare Department. HA laid out the 2010-2015 Mental Health Plan for Adults and some of the new services were implemented. Additional resources for NGO sectors were increased in the past 3 years.
- + Mental Health Reform takes years to reap the results. One good example from overseas is the Queensland 's mental health reform and Hong Kong is adopting its model.

PREVENTION & PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH

- + An area of inadequacy and segmented among the hospitals, NGOs and health sectors
- + Inadequate community support for Mental Health Promotion & Prevention, only government's Labour & Welfare Bureau undertakes the Mental Health Month yearly and other annual programmes.
- + Stigma and prejudice still attached to the persons' mind, not admitting having an episode of mental illness or accepting family members having mental health problem

PREVENTION & PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH GLOBALLY

- + Universally, every country faced the lack of preventive and promotion measures to tackle mental health problems
- + Inadequate funds or resources to support prevention and promotion programmes
- + World Health Organisation(WHO) has identified depressive disorders will be number 1 disability in the world by 2030, it also has no resources to implement any global programme

PREVENTION & PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH GLOBALLY

- + World Federation for Mental Health, a global body, established more than 60 years ,advocating prevention and promotion of mental health, also faced inadequate funds to support its programmes and even its operation
- + Earlier this year, WHO passed a resolution on Action Plan for Mental Health, intending to work together with World Federation for Mental Health for promoting mental health and adopting preventive measures. Still the problem of funding surfaced as there is no commitment from different countries to support this initiative

CONCLUSION:

MENTAL HEALTH IN HONG KONG

- + No health without mental health
- + Advocacy for Mental Health is a priority and Mental Health Policy is essential
- + A Mental Health Commission is to be set up responsible for the policy and co-ordination of Mental Health services for the adolescents, adults and elderly
- + Prevention is better than cure, prevention and promotion of mental health is crucial for a healthy community



**THANK YOU FOR
SHARING WITH ME**