



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SINGAPORE MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE 2021 SHARES LEARNING FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

24 – 25 August 2021

1. Themed 'Future Paradigms of Mental Health', the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the Singapore Mental Health Conference (SMHC) 2021 began today. The two-day virtual conference features 70 international and local speakers who will discuss opportunities and challenges related to mental healthcare amidst the backdrop of the current COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Speaking at the opening ceremony, Guest of Honour Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health said, "In Singapore, IMH found that between May 2020 to June this year, about 13% of the general population reported experiencing depression or anxiety symptoms, during the one year since the pandemic started. While these findings may be preliminary, I think that anecdotally most of us may have seen or experienced this in one way or another."

He added that the pandemic will be with us for some time and that we will have to continue to adapt the way we respond to it and how we go about our lives. "More importantly, it underscores the need to adopt a long-term approach in addressing the psychological aspects of its impact. We need to internalise the lessons learnt, not only in managing infectious diseases, but also in addressing the mental health needs of the population moving forward."

3. Some 1000 participants from the healthcare, social service, and Community Care sector, as well as community-based workers and service users are attending the virtual conference.
4. "This may be a difficult period for the world as we fight the viral war alongside an emotional battle. Despite the challenges faced, the pandemic can bring forth new opportunities in the way we interact and deliver care to our patients, like telemental health, which calls for a paradigm shift," said A/Prof Daniel Fung, Chief Executive Officer, IMH and Co-Chairperson, SMHC 2021 Advisory Committee.
5. "This pandemic has impacted all facets of our lives and our emotional resilience is being tested. It has also made us realise that there is no health without mental health. Care providers were prompted to rethink care delivery and mental health support with the physical restrictions, and we are honoured to have them and experts in the field to share their learnings with us at the conference. We hope to further leverage technology together as a sector to make mental health awareness and support more intuitive and accessible. The new mental health e-learning modules, which have been participated by over 20,000 community front liners and partners aim to do that," said Mr Tan Kwang Cheak, Chief Executive Officer, AIC and Co-Chairperson, SMHC 2021 Advisory Committee.

6. Held virtually for the first time, the conference comprises a keynote presentation, five plenary sessions, six engagement sessions and 16 breakout sessions that examine the mental health issues that individuals face, especially in the light of the pandemic, and the approaches to address the evolving mental health needs of Singapore.
7. Key highlights of the conference:
  - Keynote presentation by **Dr John A Russell**, Consultant Psychiatrist, South-East Scotland Intellectual Disability Service, UK and Associate Dean for Curricula at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, UK. He will share recent changes that have taken place in the UK in how mental health services are being provided for those with intellectual disabilities. The keynote will be held on Day 1 at 9.25am.
  - Plenary 1: Building Resilience for Future Pandemics, which comprises two presentations. The first – **“Epidemiological and impact of COVID-19” – by Prof Vernon Lee**, Director, Communicable Diseases Division, Ministry of Health explores the epidemiology and impact of COVID-19 in Singapore since its first detection locally, and what the future holds in terms of living with COVID-19 in the longer-term. The second – **“Psychological Impact of COVID-19 on the General Population” by A/Prof Mythily Subramaniam**, Assistant Chairman Medical Board (Research), Institute of Mental Health, presents key findings of a study on the prevalence of depression and anxiety among the Singapore population during the Covid-19 pandemic. It will also cover the risk and protective factors associated with the mental and social well-being outcomes. Plenary 1 will be held on Day 1 at 10.50am.
  - **Mental Health and Recovery - Digital Innovation (Breakout 1)**: The modern age of connectivity has been further spurred on by the crisis from the global COVID-19 pandemic and addressing mental health in a modern way has never been more pertinent. This session will explore how we can leverage opportunities in our new normal to heighten awareness on mental well-being and adopt digital solutions to further enhance the mental health ecosystem. Participants will get to hear from experts, including **“Evidence and Experiences: Improving functioning of people with mental health conditions through games and technology” by A/Prof Tan Bing Leet**, Director of Programmes, Singapore Institute of Technology, and **“Sharing of Digital Outreach and Online Counselling Experiences Via eC2” by Ms Yeo Hui Teng**, Social Worker, Fei Yue Community Services. This session will be held on Day 1 at 1.20pm.
  - **Peer Support Works! (Engagement Session 2)**: This session will highlight the integral role of Peer Support Specialists (PSS) in the mental healthcare system and showcase how they can value-add in clinical, rehabilitative & community settings. Participants can gain insights into how the unprecedented changes from the current COVID-19 pandemic have impacted the mental health of different segments of Singapore’s society. Through a presentation, video and interactive panel dialogue, participants will understand how PSS supports the recovery process for persons with mental health conditions by leveraging their own lived experiences; being a role model for resilience, and building a supportive community. This session will be held on Day 1 at 12.20pm.
  - Plenary 2: Wellbeing@Work – Continuum Approach comprises two presentations. The first presentation – **From Mental Wellbeing to Inclusion in the Workplace** will be by

**Prof Dame Carol Black** from the UK<sup>1</sup>, who will share her extensive research and experience on what workplace wellbeing entails, and about inclusivity at the workplace for persons with mental health conditions. The second presentation – **Best Practices in Workplace Wellbeing will be by Ms Jennifer Lee, HR director from the Dairy Farm Group (South East Asia)**, who will share first-hand insights on her company's experience in promoting good mental wellbeing and how they have created a supportive environment for people with mental health conditions. This session will be held on Day 1 at 2.25pm.

8. The Conference is jointly organised by the Institute of Mental Health ([www.imh.com.sg](http://www.imh.com.sg)), Agency for Integrated Care ([www.aic.sg](http://www.aic.sg)), National Council of Social Service ([www.ncss.gov.sg](http://www.ncss.gov.sg)), and Health Promotion Board ([www.hpb.gov.sg](http://www.hpb.gov.sg)). Five partners – CARE Singapore ([www.care.sg](http://www.care.sg)), Fei Yue Community Services ([www.fyccs.org](http://www.fyccs.org)), MINDSET Singapore ([www.mindset.com.sg](http://www.mindset.com.sg)), National Youth Council ([www.nyc.gov.sg](http://www.nyc.gov.sg)), and Resilience Collective ([www.resilience.org.sg](http://www.resilience.org.sg)) – were invited to join the Organising Committee for the 2021 edition
9. For more information on the Singapore Mental Health Conference, visit [www.smhc2021.com.sg](http://www.smhc2021.com.sg)

**For media queries, please contact:**

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<sup>1</sup> Previously Advisor to the UK government on health, work and wellbeing from 2006 to 2016, Prof Dame Carol Black currently chairs NHS Improvement's Advisory Board on Employee Health and Wellbeing and Advisor to NHSI and PHE on Health and Work.

## Chinese Translations

Singapore Mental Health Conference	新加坡心理健康大会
Institute of Mental Health	心理卫生学院
Agency for Integrated Care	护联中心
National Council of Social Service	国家福利理事会
Health Promotion Board	保健促进局
Associate Professor Daniel Fung Chief Executive Officer Institute of Mental Health SMHC 2021 Advisory Committee Co-Chairperson	冯舜圣副教授 心理卫生学院院长 2021 新加坡心理健康大会咨询委员会联合主席
Mr Tan Kwang Cheak Chief Executive Officer Agency for Integrated Care SMHC 2021 Advisory Committee Co- Chairperson	陈光杰先生 护联中心总裁 2021 新加坡心理健康大会咨询委员会联合主席