

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

4 October 2023, Wednesday

BUILDING RESILIENCE TOGETHER: CO-CREATING A THRIVING MENTAL HEALTH ECOSYSTEM

1. The 7th Singapore Mental Health Conference (SMHC) 2023 takes place 4 – 5 October, with Guest of Honour Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Health, opening the conference this morning. Themed "Co-Creating Our Mental Health Ecosystem", this two-day event fosters discourse, knowledge sharing, and networking among about 800 attendees spanning different sectors – government, healthcare, social, and education – including clients and caregivers.
2. "Covid-19 has taken a toll for many of us, exacerbating mental disorders for some and creating mental distress for others. Co-creating our mental health ecosystem is not just a responsibility, but an opportunity to promote resilience and recovery. In the tapestry of mental health, our threads of collaboration weave an ecosystem where seeking help is encouraged, quality mental health services is accessible, and empathic support is available. We want to heal, grow and build a society where mental health is a priority," said A/Prof Daniel Fung, Chief Executive Officer of the Institute of Mental Health and Co-Chairperson of the SMHC 2023 Advisory Committee.
3. "Collaboration among stakeholders across the people, private and public sectors is crucial in establishing an ecosystem that nurtures mental health and well-being. The strength of this ecosystem is dependent on the ability of organisations to work synergistically across agency boundaries, to deliver seamless services to citizens from all walks of life. Individuals play important roles too. Many of us will know someone in our social circles – be it our family members, friends or colleagues – who may be struggling with their mental health. HPB's campaign on 'Supporters who listen, support better', rolled out in September 2023, aims to engage Singaporeans on the importance of providing peer support, and equip them with basic skills such as active listening. As citizens, all of us can help build a supportive environment, where everyone can achieve better mental health and well-being," said Mr Tay Choon Hong, Chief Executive Officer of Health Promotion Board and Co-Chairperson of the SMHC 2023 Advisory Committee."
4. This year's conference highlights collective efforts in building a supportive ecosystem through six plenary sessions and 40 presentations. Topics include youth mental health, workplace well-being, peer support, digital tools in mental healthcare, and elderly mental well-being.
5. A year ago, the Beyond the Label Collective (BTL), led by the National Council of Social Service and Touch Community Services, was launched to inspire greater action towards promoting social inclusion of persons with mental health conditions. Through various initiatives and Belle, the BTL Helpbot (<https://go.gov.sg/belle-helpbot>), the Collective fosters collaboration between public, private, and community partners to promote and enable help-seeking and help-giving behaviours in schools, workplaces and the community. This effort aligns with the SG Mental Well-Being Network, which bolsters peer support to empower communities in caring for themselves and each other.

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Co-organised by



6. In the opening plenary, Mr Alvin Tan, Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth, and Trade and Industry, discussed how Well-Being Circles unite volunteers, leaders, and organisations to empower individuals through training and well-being programmes. This collaborative effort aims to enable residents to actively support community well-being. The Agency for Integrated Care has also enhanced the mental health and dementia awareness e-learning modules (<https://www.aic.sg/body-mind/mental-health-elearning>) on its website to provide volunteers with knowledge and tips for assisting residents with mental health needs.
7. In today's fast-paced world, young people face unique mental health challenges, prompting a comprehensive reform effort. Professor Patrick McGorry, Executive Director, Orygen and Professor of Youth Mental Health, University of Melbourne and Associate Professor Swapna Verma, Chairman Medical Board, Institute of Mental Health, in a plenary session focused on youth mental health reform, identified the interconnectedness of mental health with education, family, social support, and digital technology. Over the next two days, various partners also share research insights, spanning social media's impact, service design, device use, resilience, and school-based mental health programmes.
8. The importance of workplace mental health's is another highlight in this year's conference, with a track on fostering a mentally healthy work environment. Leaders' role in driving mental health initiatives is the focus of discussions by industry leaders from Otis Elevator, Deutsche Bank, and the Singapore Public Service Division.
9. Digital mental health interventions offer increased accessibility and reduced stigma, making them crucial in the evolving mental health landscape. The discussion track introduced digital tools like personalised therapeutics through digital phenotyping, internet-delivered Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and gamification for dementia caregiver communication. New Zealand's 10-year strategy, "Kia Manawanui", leverages digital tools to complement traditional mental health care, a topic discussed by Ms Robyn Shearer, Deputy Chief Executive of New Zealand's Ministry of Health.
10. As our population ages, prioritising senior mental well-being becomes crucial for better health outcomes and improved quality of life in later years. Collaborative efforts, including personalised tele-care for seniors and robust community support networks like CREST and COMIT, aim to address challenges such as loneliness, frailty, and dementia among the elderly. Attendees will watch the local short film "[Lady!](#)", a documentary that chronicles the bittersweet journey of a caregiver who looked after her late husband who had young onset dementia. The panel discussion that follows empowers those with dementia, emphasising the increasing importance of senior mental health in our aging society.
11. Delegates will also hear the experiences of trained peer supporters from various backgrounds—schools, workplaces, and communities— as they share their journeys, challenges, and positive impact made on others as well as themselves.

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About Singapore Mental Health Conference 2023

The inaugural Singapore Mental Health Conference was held in 2013. It is jointly organised by the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), Health Promotion Board (HPB), Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and National Council of Social Service (NCSS), to provide a national platform for learning and network in mental health. Community partners are invited to join the SMHC Organising Committee to provide a community perspective to the conference programming. This year, four other partners – Filos Community Services, Jardines MINDSET, MOH Office for Healthcare Transformation and Singapore Anglican Community Services – were invited to join the organising committee. For more information on SMHC, visit www.smhc.com.sg.

About Institute of Mental Health (IMH)

IMH, a member of the National Healthcare Group, is the only tertiary psychiatric care institution in Singapore. Located on the sprawling 23-hectare campus of Buangkok Green Medical Park in the north-eastern part of Singapore, IMH offers a multidisciplinary and comprehensive range of psychiatric, rehabilitative and therapy services in hospital-based and community-based settings. The 2,000-bedded hospital aims to meet the needs of three groups of patients – children and adolescents (aged below 19 years), adults and the elderly. Besides providing clinical services, IMH dedicates resources to carry out mental health promotion and raise mental health literacy. IMH also leads in mental health research and training the next generation of mental health professionals in Singapore. For more information, please visit www.imh.com.sg.

About National Council of Social Service (NCSS)

NCSS is the umbrella body for over 450 member social service agencies in Singapore. Its mission is to provide leadership and direction in enhancing the capabilities and capacity of its members, advocating for social service needs and strengthening strategic partnerships, for an effective social service ecosystem. Community Chest is the fundraising and engagement arm of NCSS and the Social Service Institute (SSI) is the human capital development arm of NCSS. For more information, please visit www.ncss.gov.sg.



About Agency for Integrated Care (AIC)

AIC aims to create a vibrant care community enabling people to live well and age gracefully. AIC integrates care to support the needs of seniors as they grow old. We reach out to caregivers and seniors with information on staying active and ageing well, and connect people to services they need. We support partners in strengthening their capability to deliver quality care, and bring partners to work together to meet the needs of our ageing population. Our work in the community brings care services and information closer to those in need. For more information, please visit www.aic.sg.

About the Health Promotion Board (HPB)

The Health Promotion Board (HPB) was established as a statutory board under the Ministry of Health, Singapore, in 2001 with the vision of building “A Nation of Healthy People”. HPB aims to empower Singaporeans to attain optimal health, increase the quality and years of healthy life and prevent illness, disability and premature death. As the key agency overseeing national health promotion and disease prevention programmes, HPB spearheads health education, promotion and prevention programmes as well as creates a health-supportive environment in Singapore. It develops and organises health promotion and disease prevention programmes, reaching out to the healthy, the at-risk and the unhealthy at all stages of life – children, youths, adults and older Singapore residents. Its health promotion initiatives cover nutrition, physical activity, mental well-being, health screening, tobacco control and communicable disease education. More information can be found at www.hpb.gov.sg.

Annex 1 - Chinese Translations

Singapore Mental Health Conference (SMHC)	新加坡心理健康大会
Institute of Mental Health (IMH)	心理卫生学院
National Council of Social Service (NCSS)	国家福利理事会
Agency for Integrated Care (AIC)	护联中心
Health Promotion Board (HPB)	保健促进局
A/Prof Daniel Fung Chief Executive Officer, IMH SMHC 2023 Advisory Committee Co-Chair	冯舜圣副教授 心理卫生学院院长 2023 新加坡心理健康大会咨询委员会 联合主席
Mr Tay Choon Hong Chief Executive Officer, HPB SMHC 2023 Advisory Committee Co-Chair	郑春鸿 保健促进局局长 2023 新加坡心理健康大会咨询委员会 联合主席
Mr Gerard Ee, Chairman, AIC	余福金博士 护联中心主席
Mr Tan Kwang Cheak, Chief Executive Officer, AIC	陈光杰 护联中心总裁
Ms Tan Li San Chief Executive Officer National Council of Social Service	陈丽珊 国家福利理事会执行理事长
COMIT Community Intervention Team	社区辅助小组
CREST Community Outreach Team	邻里咨询小组