



## MEDIA RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date of Issue: 12 Jul 2010

### **GPs go back to school to beef up mental health expertise**

For the first time, a comprehensive part-time Graduate Diploma in Mental Health (GDMH) will be offered to primary healthcare physicians - the General Practitioners (GPs) in Singapore, to help strengthen mental health services at the primary level.

Jointly offered by the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and the Division of Graduate Medical Studies, National University of Singapore (NUS), the new one- year course will provide a comprehensive and structured training programme for GPs in psychiatry and counseling by training them appropriately and adequately for the role of providing mental health services to the community.

“We hope to spur interest and develop the expertise of GPs in mental health care with this new course. GPs are the first port of call for the majority of the population, hence a well-trained general practitioner would be equipped to detect and treat patients with minor mental health problems like mild anxiety and depression,” said A/Prof Chiam Peak Chiang, Program Director for the Graduate Diploma in Mental Health, National Mental Health Blueprint and Director of Training Division, IMH. A/Prof Chiam is also the Education Director of the Education Director's Office, IMH and a Senior Consultant with the Department of Geriatric Psychiatry, IMH.

“IMH would certainly like to work in partnership with GPs to manage the more stable mental health patients. Having trained GPs to provide mental health care also makes such care more accessible for the community,” she added.

The new graduate diploma supports the Ministry of Health (MOH)'s Mental Health Policy under the Mental Health Blueprint, which emphasises on strengthening mental health manpower and appropriate provision of mental health services within the community. It also augments the efforts of the Mental Health-GP Partnership Programme which has been run by IMH since 2005.

“We are actively strengthening chronic disease management in the community and engaging General Practitioners in the process of doing so. With an aging population, we believe being managed in the community is what the vast majority of our patients with chronic diseases want. Following the launch of Chronic Disease Management Programme (CDMP) involving Diabetes, Hypertension, Stroke and hyperlipidemia in 2006, we have extended this programme to cover mental illnesses in 2009. Patients with chronic conditions such as Diabetes, Cancer and Stroke often have co-morbidities such as anxiety or depression, which can be effectively and appropriately managed by their own family physicians. Hence, the Graduate Diploma in Mental Health is not only a training programme for GPs to update their skills & knowledge in the management of mental illnesses, but also part of an overall strategy and plan to provide better holistic care to patients in the community. ” said Dr Ho Han Kwee, Director, Primary & Community Care Division, Ministry of Health.

The course is designed for primary healthcare physicians who may have a busy work schedule but yet aspire to upgrade their medical competency and gain deeper insight into psychiatry.

Upon successful completion of the course, the doctor should be able to identify the various types of psychiatric disorders, be familiar with the principles of treatment approach in different psychiatric cases, apply assessment methodology to different mental disorders and learn management skills and prescriptions of medication.

“General practitioners can play an important role both in caring for people requiring treatment as well as in promoting positive mental health in the community,” said Prof Goh Lee Gan, Head, Division of Family Medicine in the University Medicine Cluster, National University Health System and President of the College of Family Physicians, Singapore.

A/Prof Chiam said: “We are all very excited about this new course. It will be highly interactive, with case formulation through video and live presentations. We will have journal discussions and case vignettes. Course reading materials will also be given before the lessons for self-study. There will also be clinical attachment opportunity in our hospital for the doctors to gain valuable experience in handling patients with mental disorders.”

The course will cover 6 modules – *Introduction To Psychiatry; Psychosis; Mood, Anxiety and Grief; Addiction/ Personality Disorders; Child And Adolescent Mental Health including Learning Disabilities; and Psychogeriatrics.*

Doctors who have already undergone the Mental Health - GP Partnership Programme training since 2007 will be exempted from the first module ‘*Introduction to Psychiatry*’.

The application form can be downloaded from IMH’s website [www.imh.com.sg](http://www.imh.com.sg). The closing date is 6 Aug 2010. More information on the Graduate Diploma in Mental Health Course is attached in the Annex below.

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**About the Institute of Mental Health**

The Institute of Mental Health is the only tertiary mental health centre in Singapore. It offers a multi-faceted and comprehensive range of psychiatric, rehabilitative and counseling services to meet the needs of three groups of patients – children and adolescents, adults and the elderly. IMH also runs mental health education programmes for the general public. These programmes aim to promote mental wellness and raise awareness of the importance and benefits of prevention, early detection and treatment of mental disorders.

**About the Mental Health – GP Partnership Programme**

The Mental Health - GP Partnership Programme trains GPs to manage patients with stable mental illness. To date, there are 40 GPs under the programme, who have received training from IMH and who work closely with IMH psychiatrists to manage their patients. The programme is in line with MOH's emphasis on managing patients with stable or long-term illnesses in the community, with the support of primary healthcare physicians. It offers value-added, affordable, and highly accessible services for patients with mental illnesses, while ensuring the best possible clinical care in the community.

## Graduate Diploma in Mental Health (GDMH)

### General Information

GDMH is a structured training programme in mental health care for family physicians in Singapore. It is accredited by NUS in conjunction with Institute of Mental Health.

### Aims & Objectives

GDMH aims to provide a comprehensive and structured training programme for family physicians in psychiatry and counseling by training them appropriately and adequately for the role in community mental health care.

### Duration

The minimum candidature period for the course will be 1 year and the maximum candidature period for the course is 5 years.

### Eligibility

The admission requirements for the GDMH programme are:

- (1) a recognised basic medical degree qualification; and
- (2) all general practitioners who are interested in Mental Health including those who have signed up for the Mental Health-GP Partnership programme; or
- (3) primary care physicians who have completed housemanship and other non-traditional source medical officers

### Course Overview & Structure

The course is divided into 6 modules, with each module comprising 2 learning units conducted over a 2-month period. Course content will be covered by lectures, course reading materials, video and live presentations, journal discussion, case vignettes, clinical attachment, self-study and e-conferencing.

The 6 modules that are covered in the course are:

Module 1	Introduction to Psychiatry (Optional for GPs who has completed GP training in Mental Health GP Programme)	2 months
Module 2	Psychosis	2 months
Module 3	Mood, Anxiety and Grief	2 months
Module 4	Addiction / Personality Disorders	2 months
Module 5	Child & Adolescent Mental Health including Learning Disabilities	2 months
Module 6	Psychogeriatrics	2 months

Much of the programme will run on-site at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) in its initial year, under the auspices of the Division of Graduate Medical Studies (DGMS), NUS, which will have overall ownership and oversight via its Director.