

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Date: 27 September 2013**

### **Inaugural Conference to Address Changing Mental Healthcare Needs**

Singapore Mental Health Conference  
27 - 28 September 2013, Max Atria, Singapore Expo

1. More than 300 local and overseas mental healthcare professionals and community service providers converged at the opening of the inaugural Singapore Mental Health Conference (SMHC) held at Max Atria, Singapore Expo. Gracing the event was Dr Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Manpower and Mayor of South West District.
2. Four plenary talks, nine breakout sessions and a plethora of topics ranging from addictions, psycho-geriatrics, psychiatric rehabilitation and nursing, forensic psychiatry and mental health research will be presented during the one-and-a-half day conference.
3. Mdm Halimah Yacob, Speaker of Parliament and Member of Parliament for Jurong, presented the Opening Plenary. A passionate champion for mental health issues, Mdm Halimah shared some of the arduous challenges faced by persons with mental health issues (PMIs) and their caregivers. She urged those in the mental healthcare sector to consolidate their efforts to re-examine existing programmes and policies to change mind sets, provide more opportunities, demolish stigma and discrimination to build more social acceptance for PMIs.
4. A/Prof Chua Hong Choon, Chief Executive Officer, IMH, shared: "The next level of challenge for us is also to encourage every health-care consumer to participate and be proactive in his or her own care. This means there must be more knowledge sharing by the mental health experts with the PMIs. Well informed clients are usually able to understand their conditions better and are more committed to take ownership of their treatment.

5. The conference also featured speakers from around the region. From Kwai Chung Hospital in Hong Kong, Dr William Lo, its Chief Executive Officer, shared insights on the strategies that Hong Kong SAR has adopted to meet its changing mental healthcare needs. Speaker from Japan, Dr Hiroto Ito, Director, Department of Social Psychiatry, National Institute of Mental Health presented his views on 'Measuring Quality in Mental Healthcare'.
6. Three recovering patients and a caregiver will also be presenting and participating in panel discussions in this conference, providing them a platform to share from the perspectives of consumers of mental healthcare services.
7. Julius Chan, 39 years old, will contribute his personal experience of recovery during the breakout session on psychiatric rehabilitation. Mr Chan was diagnosed with chronic schizophrenia, anxiety and depression disorders. During his most severe state, he had a scuffle with the police, was arrested and subsequently charged in court. Now a Certified Peer Specialist Practitioner with the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH), he will share the life skills he had accumulated over the years of coping with his mental health conditions.
8. For the closing plenary, A/Prof Chua and Dr Tan Weng Mooi, Chief, Community Mental Health Division, Agency for Integrated Care will provide a peek into the strategies that are being developed for mental healthcare in Singapore.
9. The SMHC is organised in conjunction with the National Healthcare Group's Singapore Biomedical and Health Congress. The SMHC is one of IMH's series of events to commemorate the hospital's 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year. A separate event, Psychosis Symposium, was organised on 26 Sept as a pre-conference to SMHC. More than 150 local and foreign participants and speakers shared their expertise in the treatment and management of early psychosis.
10. A play staged and produced by IMH's staff, patients and volunteers is slated for performance on 14 December at the Lee Foundation Theatre, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. Diving into the lives of four ordinary persons who try their best to cope with mental health issues, this play hopes to challenge the audience to view mental illness from a different perspective. Details on ticket sales can be found at [www.imh.com.sg](http://www.imh.com.sg).

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***About the Institute of Mental Health, Singapore***

*The Institute of Mental Health (IMH) is the only tertiary psychiatric care institution in Singapore. Located on the sprawling 25-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 counseling services. The 2010-bedded hospital aims to meet the needs of three groups of patients – children and adolescents (age below 19 years), adults and the elderly. Besides providing clinical services, IMH also leads in mental health research and training the next generation of mental health professionals in Singapore.*

*For more information, visit: [www.imh.com.sg](http://www.imh.com.sg)*