

MEDIA RELEASE

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Date of Issue: 30 January 2019, Wednesday

Singapore Mental Health Conference 2019 Explores Empowerment for Resilience and Recovery

1. The 2019 edition of the Singapore Mental Health Conference (SMHC) was opened by Guest of Honour, President Halimah Yacob on 30 January 2019.
2. Themed “Empowerment for Resilience and Recovery”, the two-day Conference is organised by the Institute of Mental Health (IMH), the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), Agency for Integrated Care and Health Promotion Board. The Conference features 46 speakers sharing their experience and insights with some 500 delegates from the healthcare, social service and community care sectors and consumers of mental health services.
3. “Very often, we think of recovery as an individual getting treatment and therapy. But, these only address symptoms of the mental health conditions. Without support from the larger eco-system, the journey to full recovery will be an uphill struggle. The key here is empowerment – harnessing the potential and capabilities of this eco-system to help persons in recovery find their footing again. So, we should not overlook the potential or abilities of entities like the employers, schools, community and social groups and even persons with lived experience. The SMHC 2019 looks at how we can harness resources from the eco-system and its synergistic interactions to achieve positive outcomes,” said Prof Chua Hong Choon, CEO, IMH and Co-Chairperson of the SMHC 2019 Advisory Committee.
4. SMHC 2019 opened with a Keynote Dialogue “The Recovery Perspectives” with six panellists representing various entities to share views on what recovery entails and the role each plays.
5. This was followed by seven plenary sessions and five discussion tracks exploring the role of different stakeholders – persons with lived experience, communities, advocacy groups – and public outreach in addressing the challenges experienced by people with mental health conditions in their recovery journey.

6. Two international speakers presented at this year's conference – Mr Gared Jones, Chief Networks Officer of Points of Light, and Prof Samson Tse, Associate Dean (Undergraduate Education) & Director of Experiential Learning from The University of Hong Kong. In the first plenary, Mr Jones shed light on the future trends of society and engagement and their implications for social sector organisations. Delegates heard from Prof Tse on the experience and lessons learnt in Hong Kong's design and implementation of recovery-oriented services, in the fourth plenary.
7. Persons with mental health conditions need not be passive consumers of services provided by the healthcare, social and community care sectors. Their lived experience is an invaluable tool to empower other persons in recovery. The plenary session "Empowered Service Users, Better Service Delivery" shed light on how peer-led programmes, such as Club HEAL's Our HEALing Voice programme, can contribute to a person's recovery journey. Peer support specialists from IMH and the Singapore Anglican Community Services shared at different track sessions how they leverage lived experiences to provide a unique voice to the rehabilitation and recovery of persons with mental health conditions.
8. Building mental resilience is another area the Conference will focus on. This is where advocates and ground-up initiatives play a vital role in empowering people and communities. Ms Kuik Shiao-yin of The Thought Collective discussed how organisations can build trust and foster wellness through strategic stakeholder outreach and engagement while youth advocate Mr Cho Ming Xiu of Campus PSY touched on empowering youths to take the lead in raising awareness and building resilience.
9. The Conference's breakout sessions allowed participants to deep-dive into specific topics. For example, a dedicated track on addictions – with clinicians and experts discussing the approaches in rehabilitating persons with addictions. Another discussion focused on TOUCH Community Service's DIGITALActive initiative in helping youths manage gaming issues.
10. "Our research has shown that persons with mental health conditions experience a lower quality of life than the general population. We have seen the value of lived experience and should empower persons in recovery to leverage their experiences in service planning and development of solutions. This will promote greater social inclusion and is key to improving the quality of life of persons in recovery. The robust discussions at SMHC 2019 will provide insights on how we can work together to empower persons in recovery and build resilience," said Ms Tina Hung, NCSS Deputy CEO and Co-Chairperson of the SMHC 2019 Advisory Committee.

About Singapore Mental Health Conference 2019

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. Five partners – Clarity Singapore Limited, Club HEAL, MINDSET, Singapore Anglican Community Services and TOUCH Community Services – were invited to join the Committee for the 2019 edition. For more information on SMHC, visit www.smhc.com.sg.

About Institute of Mental Health (IMH)

The Institute of Mental Health (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 2010-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 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 organisations in Singapore. Its mission is to provide leadership and direction in enhancing the capabilities and capacity of our members, advocating for social service needs and strengthening strategic partnerships, for an effective social service ecosystem. Community Chest and Social Service Institute (SSI) are part of NCSS. For more information, please visit www.ncss.gov.sg.

About Agency for Integrated Care

The Agency for Integrated Care (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

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 the people of Singapore 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 relevant 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 programmes include nutrition, mental health, physical activity, smoking control and communicable disease education. HPB also promotes healthy ageing, integrated health screening, and chronic disease education and management. More information can be found at www.hpb.gov.sg.