

## New Specialised Wards



IMH has set up two newly refurbished specialised wards for early psychosis and mood disorders. Previously, patients with these conditions were housed with others in the general acute wards. The new specialised wards aim to create a more conducive environment for treatment. They also allow for the introduction of more customised programmes to meet the needs of these groups of patients.

To ensure that the wards meet the end users' needs and expectations, the teams engaged patients and caregivers in the development of the wards and its services. Their feedback was used to create a cozy, home-like environment that facilitates therapeutic work and recovery with features such as an open pantry, a night lounge and an outdoor garden.

### Early Psychosis Intervention Programme Inpatient Centre

The Early Psychosis Intervention Programme (EPIP) Inpatient Centre became operational on 1 February 2016. The 20-bed mixed gender facility complements EPIP's efforts to manage individuals aged 16 to 40 with early psychosis and those at high risk of developing psychosis across inpatient, outpatient and community settings.

EPIP is helmed by a multidisciplinary team which includes Peer Support Specialists (PSS), who are either patients-in-recovery or caregivers, and healthcare professionals. To

complement the new space, EPIP has specially-designed programmes to engage inpatients in meaningful activities and to promote and support recovery. Some examples include groups run by case managers, exercise activities conducted by nurses, occupational therapists, and volunteers.

The PSS play an important role in the ward and are part of the recovery-oriented culture in EPIP. They run activities such as art and craft and group discussions twice a week to engage the patients, in addition to the ward's programmes. "This gives patients an opportunity to open up about issues they are facing, support each other and understand they aren't alone," said Desmond Ng, one of the PSS. "We also share our lived experiences and journey to recovery."

### Mood Disorders Unit Inpatient Service

IMH's Mood Disorders Unit (MDU) was set up in 2013 to provide holistic tertiary care for those with mood disorders such as major depression and bipolar disorder. With the newly refurbished Inpatient Service, patients benefit from seamless treatment intervention from the point of contact to inpatient treatment if required, and to support in the community.

An experienced multidisciplinary team provides the treatments required by this group of patients. These include a variety of group therapies ranging from art therapy, which helps patients improve self-awareness and express their emotions through artwork

to occupational therapy to improve functioning through the use of activities.

In addition, the MDU offers a day therapy programme for outpatients with mood disorders, which utilises similar therapies. The programme also offers Interpersonal & Social Rhythm Psychotherapy, which helps patients learn to regulate their biological and social rhythms to protect against future mood episodes.

The multidisciplinary team is supported by PSS who have recovered from mood disorders. They provide individual peer support to suitable patients and co-facilitate therapy groups to share and build skills that can help them cope with their mental health and other life challenges.

*If you would like to find out more about MDU's day therapy programme or would like to refer your clients to the programme, please contact [mdudaytherapy@imh.com](mailto:mdudaytherapy@imh.com).*



*Clockwise from top right corner: Cozy, open-concept areas to encourage social interaction; reception area; and art therapy session in the wards.*

## SPOTLIGHT ON PARTNERS

# Club HEAL

*By Dr Radiah Salim, Founder and President of Club HEAL*

Club HEAL was founded in February 2012 to help people with mental health issues and their families lead fulfilling lives. To this end, we have been collaborating with IMH on many fronts to empower our clients and their caregivers.

Our most recent partnership aims to provide residents in the West with easier access to addictions care. Since September 2015, a counsellor from the National Addictions Management Service has been stationed at Club HEAL @ Bukit Batok East every Tuesday to help those with addictions issues.

One of Club HEAL's core services is our day psychiatric rehabilitative programme. It equips clients with pertinent information on



*Pushcart in IMH with crafts made by Club HEAL's clients.*

medication and symptom management to support their recovery, and also develops life and social skills through therapeutic activities, such as art and craft. Clients from IMH's Early Psychosis Intervention Programme are regularly referred to Club HEAL for these activities and for added support at the community level.

IMH has also allowed us to use OCTAVE's Craft Creates to conduct pottery sessions for our clients. Crafts made by our clients are sold at a pushcart in IMH. Our clients

also man the pushcart, which gives them an opportunity to showcase their work, interact with the public and build their confidence.

In 2014, we worked with IMH to help mental health advocate Suf Supiani successfully launch his album "Solitude" to promote awareness for mental health. Through such activities and greater mental health awareness, we hope to reduce the stigma against mental illness, thereby removing the biggest stumbling block to recovery.

## I am ABLE!

By Pat (Pseudonym)

I have been working as a multimedia designer in a university for two years. Before that, I was admitted to a hospital twice after I went through tough moments – firstly, a loss of my savings and secondly, my father's death. During these episodes, I heard voices and often went on my knees, hoping for forgiveness. I didn't want to eat and the nurses had to try to make me change my mind. As it turned out, I had schizophrenia. I underwent treatment, made good progress in my recovery and returned to the workforce where I am now.

Late last year, my case manager called to ask if I wanted to give the 9th Abilympics\* in France a try and I said yes. As I was not familiar with the latest features of the software we had to use, I watched videos online to pick it up. Thankfully, we were given the question paper beforehand and I prepared myself with some research and tried out a few designs before I flew off to Bordeaux.

I found the Abilympics an eye-opening experience, not because of the great welcome dinner with wine, but the display of passion in every participant during the competition, and across all kinds of crafts. I loved the drive I saw in them, and this was the biggest thing I took home with me. I didn't win any medals, but I gained inspiration. I enjoyed my time with them because I learnt that I was not alone. Despite the challenges we faced, we had skills and were able, and we were all truly winners in our own way.

*\*The first Abilympics was held in 1981 in Japan. The Abilympics – which combines Abilities with the idea of the Olympics – is the world's largest skills competition featuring persons with disabilities. This year's Abilympics was held in Bordeaux, France and saw over 600 contestants from 35 countries participating in 49 skills contests. Four patients from IMH were among the participants.*



A poster designed by Pat as her submission for the 2016 Abilympics competition.

# Managing ADHD in Schools



Allied Educator Mdm Vasanthi with her ACE Award.

After 20 years in the banking industry, Mdm Rengaraju Vasanthi switched career to become an Allied Educator in 2007. She has since been making a difference in the lives of students with special learning and behavioural needs in Elias Park Primary School.

When a student exhibited disruptive behaviour and couldn't sit still in class, she worked closely with his family to have him assessed. The boy was later diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and is currently receiving treatment. In school, Mdm Vasanthi taught him strategies to help him focus in class. He has shown improvement in learning and behaviour in class.

She often explores new ways to engage her students with ADHD. To enhance their reading ability, for instance, she uses apps and innovative ideas like getting the students to create their own stories. As a result, the students were able to pay attention for a longer period and showed greater interest in their learning.

Mdm Vasanthi was one of the ten recipients of the ACE Awards, which recognise children and teens with ADHD who have overcome challenges to realise their

potential, as well as exemplary mentors working with children with ADHD.

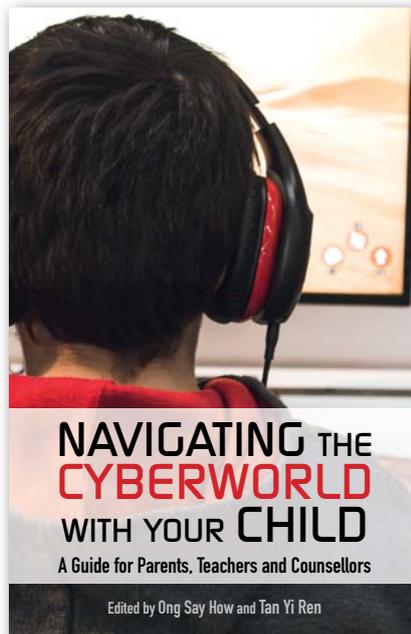
The awards were presented at the 3rd Asian Congress on ADHD. The Congress, organised by IMH and partners, was held in Singapore for the first time, with Dr Janil Puthuchery, Minister of State for Education and Communications and Information, as the guest of honour. The congress brought together local and international professionals in healthcare, education and social sectors as well as caregivers to share best practices and form collaborative networks for holistic and effective management of ADHD.

ADHD is the most common mental health condition picked up in school-going children aged 6 to 19 under REACH (Response, Early Intervention and Assessment in Community Mental Health). REACH works closely with schools, voluntary welfare organisations and general practitioners to improve the mental wellbeing of students and identify any emotional, behavioural and developmental disorders early. The pick-up rate for ADHD across all four REACH zones (north, south, east, west) covering all schools in Singapore has reached 242 from a rate of just five from one zone when REACH first started in 2007.

# Using the Internet Safely

The Internet has changed our lives – and not all for the good. “As a mental health professional, it is increasingly common to see a young person being brought to the clinic or hospital by their parents or caregivers for compulsive or unhealthy use of the computer and the Internet,” said Adj A/Prof Ong Say How, Chief and Senior Consultant, Department of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, IMH. “Whether Internet addiction is considered a clinical disorder is still very much debatable but we know that its severity is highly correlated with that of comorbid psychiatric disorders.”

To help parents, teachers and counsellors understand the different types of Internet-related addictions children may face as well as prevention and treatment approaches, IMH has produced a new guide on Internet addiction titled *Navigating the Cyberworld with Your Child*. The book, edited by Dr Ong and Mr Tan Yi Ren, Assistant Psychologist, Department of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, IMH, brings together 12 researchers and practitioners



from the fields of child psychology and psychiatry to cover issues such as online gaming addiction, social media usage and texting as well as legal and forensic implications of Internet addiction. The book is available in major bookstores.

# World-class Nursing Education

IMH has maintained its American Nurses Credentialing Center's (ANCC) Accreditation with Distinction, the highest accolade from ANCC, after meeting stringent criteria for the quality of nursing education programmes as well as processes and framework in place for evaluation. IMH's Nursing Education department develops nursing education programmes that not only meet the training needs of psychiatric nurses, but also support professional development, innovation and new knowledge development. The ANCC reaccreditation is testament to the high-quality continuing nursing education that IMH provides to upgrade the clinical skills of nurses working in mental health settings and to improve care delivery.

# Building Family Resilience and Personal Empowerment



Speakers at the plenary on family resilience training: Lori Ashcraft (right) and Eugene Johnson.

Like-minded partners and individuals with a keen interest in mental health came together to network and attend presentations at the Singapore Mental Health Conference (SMHC) held at MAX Atria, Singapore Expo, on 27 and 28 May 2016.

Into its third year, SMHC is organised by IMH, Agency for Integrated Care, National Council of Social Service (NCSS) and Health Promotion Board. The event was graced by Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Minister for Social and Family Development.

Themed “Mind Matters, Family Matters”, this year’s conference focused on the increasingly important role of the family in supporting loved ones with mental health conditions. As the building blocks of society, families provide the first line of support for persons with mental health issues. However, relationships may sometimes be strained because of the stress caregivers face.

It is important to face the challenges together and continue to build resilience as a family. Caregivers at SMHC learnt to build positive relationships through the family resilience training.

While achieving family resilience, one must also continue to build personal empowerment and be actively involved in his or her own recovery. In recent years, mental health services are adopting a more peer-driven and recovery-oriented approach. Persons with mental health issues are roped in to provide peer support as well as be involved in the design and implementation of services. In an effort to support peer empowerment in recovery, it was announced at SMHC that IMH, NCSS and the voluntary welfare organisations will be co-developing a peer specialist framework to create pathways for persons with mental health issues to contribute to the community to their fullest potential.



INSTITUTE  
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# Graduate Diploma in Mental Health

Graduation Ceremony 2016

Wood Park Hotel

## Strengthening Mental Health Services at the Primary Level

*A/Prof Chen Fun Gee, Director, Division of Graduate Medical Studies, National University of Singapore, presents the graduation certificate to Dr Shivcharan Gill.*

Like any other illness, help for mental health issues can be found right in one's own neighbourhood, thanks to a growing number of general practitioners (GPs) who are equipped to detect and provide primary care services to those with mild to moderate mental health issues. This is part of IMH's efforts to grow a network of GP partners in the community to provide convenient and accessible mental healthcare through training and partnership.

The Graduate Diploma in Mental Health (GDMH), jointly offered by IMH and the Division of Graduate Medical Studies, National University of Singapore, was launched in 2010 to enhance the capabilities of GPs in mental healthcare. This 12-month programme provides comprehensive and structured training in community psychiatry and counselling to enable GPs to assess, identify and manage various psychiatric conditions. To date, a total of 102 GPs have successfully undergone the programme.

IMH also runs the Mental Health – General Practitioner (GP) Partnership Programme to facilitate the management of stable psychiatric patients in the community. This allows patients to receive care at clinics close to their home and at their convenience, which in turn encourages greater compliance to follow-up treatments. Patients can also receive holistic care from the GPs for any other chronic conditions that they may have. There are currently 111 GPs under the MH-GPP programme.

**Dr Shivcharan Gill, one of the recent GDMH graduates, shares her thoughts on the programme.**

### 1) What inspired you to embark on the GDMH programme?

I have seen a fair number of patients with various mental and emotional health issues in my clinic. In my social settings, there were numerous occasions when friends and relatives turned to me for mental health advice. I was treating them to the best of my ability but felt that with the GDMH training, I would be more assured and confident in my treatment and could fill the gaps in my knowledge.

### 2) Do you see many patients with mental health issues at your clinic?

Yes I do. I work in a clinic with multinational patients of varied problems, who are more open about their issues. I am told that I am a good listener and many have poured their heart out to me. Being in this privileged position to help, I needed to be sure I was providing the right interventions. The course also helped me realise which patient needed early psychiatric intervention.

### 3) Are you more confident in managing mental health issues after completing the programme?

The course has been helpful in reinforcing both diagnostics and therapeutics. These include the various tests that need to be monitored while patients are on medication and which patients needed to be referred to specialised care. We also got to know the psychiatrists at IMH better so it is easier to make referrals to suit patient to doctor appropriately. I also feel that the clinical attachments were excellent in giving very practical lessons in managing mental health.

Despite the numerous challenges many of us as family physicians face in trying to multi-task and manage clinic, family, teaching medical students and carry out administrative work, this course is certainly "doable" at any age.

# Talking about Suicidal Behaviours

By Ms Brenda Lee, Senior Clinical Psychologist, IMH



Suicidal behaviours refer to a range of behaviours which include having thoughts of ending one's life, planning a suicide, making an attempt, and the act of suicide itself. According to the World Health Organisation approximately 800,000 lives are lost to suicide each year. While mental health conditions, especially mood disorders, may make one more vulnerable to suicidal behaviours, factors such as acute emotional distress, relationship difficulties and isolation, sudden life changes and chronic illness can also play a part.

It is an issue that many people, with or without mental health conditions, may struggle with at some point in their lives, but one that is often left unspoken. One of the biggest consequences of silence is that people who need help may end up not getting it. Those with suicidal behaviours tend to suffer in silence due to fear of stigmatisation, judgment, and a lack of understanding from their loved ones and people around them. This may, in turn, reinforce a sense of hopelessness and helplessness about their situation and emotional state.

Talking to someone about their suicidal behaviours may be difficult, but it is an important first step in helping them. It gives the person the opportunity to share his or her feelings and thoughts, provides emotional relief, and alleviates isolation and hopelessness. Talking about it openly also allows you to better understand the person's situation and helps you feel more equipped to provide help.

**Here are some pointers to keep in mind when initiating this conversation if you think someone might have suicidal behaviours. There are no fixed questions or responses, but your attitude and stance are important.**

- **Be sensitive** but ask direct questions in a way that allows the person to be honest with you about how they are feeling and thinking. For instance, "I notice you have been having a really hard time lately, and sometimes when people are going through a tough time, they may think of suicide. Have you been thinking this way?"
- **Do not trivialise** their problems or make judgments. Listen with an open mind. While it is often difficult to fully understand another person's plight, focus on identifying and empathising with how the person's problem is making him or her feel.
- **Communicate** your care and concern and your willingness to be there for them. For instance, say "I care about you and I am worried about how much distress you are experiencing. Can we talk about ways I or people around you can help?" Help can take different forms, such as companionship, a listening ear, helping the individual make an appointment with a helping professional or looking at ways to ameliorate the problems that is causing them distress.

**For assistance, call these 24-hour helplines – Samaritans of Singapore: 1800-221 4444, Mental Health Helpline: 63892222**

Institute of Mental Health, Singapore t (65) 6389 2000 | f (65) 6389 2986 | [www.imh.com.sg](http://www.imh.com.sg) | [enquiry@imh.com.sg](mailto:enquiry@imh.com.sg)

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