

Inspiring recovery: peer support movement gains momentum



In dialogue: Employers and Peer Support Specialists discuss the role and value of Peer Support Specialists.

On 12 April 2019, 18 graduates received their Certificate in Peer Support at the Peer Support Specialist Programme graduation ceremony.

This national training programme was launched in 2016 by the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), with support from IMH and other mental health agencies. Through a structured training framework, participants acquire skills that enable them to leverage their experience of recovery from mental health conditions to support others in their recovery. The course includes 80 hours of classroom training and 100 hours of supervised practicum to develop their competencies and job readiness for peer support work. To date, NCSS has trained a total of 80 Peer Support Specialists.

Eleven agencies, including IMH, have hired certified Peer Support Specialists to date. At MindCare, a community mental health service within AMKFSC Community Services Ltd, Peer Support Specialists are part of its care and support team. "They inspire tenacity in the team by showing that they can perform to expectations and rebound faster from setbacks," said Ms Sharon Ng, deputy head at MindCare. Ms Ng added, "The sharing of their lived experiences often breaks down resistance in clients, who also respond positively to

their person-centred approach on recovery."

Peer Support Specialists can also harness their lived experiences to destigmatise mental health conditions, create awareness that recovery is possible and be a voice for persons in recovery. For instance, four graduates are ambassadors of the nation-wide mental health anti-stigma campaign "Beyond the Label".

NCSS, with the support of Workforce Singapore, implemented an Apprenticeship Scheme, which provides the graduates a work trial opportunity for up to nine months. Employers can also assess their job fit through such work trials. Interested employers and Peer Support Specialists can contact the administering agency, AMKFSC Community Services at mindcare@amkfsc.org.sg or 6904 9817.

To integrate peer support roles and a recovery culture within organisations, NCSS also introduced consultancy services to support social service and healthcare agencies in the review of their existing structures and processes.

More information can be found on NCSS' website: <https://www.ncss.gov.sg/GatewayPages/Social-Services/Persons-with-Mental-Health-Conditions>.



“ I hope to bring peers who are in a difficult and scary situation to the safe and growing haven that I am in, and make them see that there is hope and that people are willing to help if they reach out. ”

~ Mr Justin Lim (pictured, above), graduate from the 4th batch of the Peer Support Specialist Programme



Award recipients from IMH together with the senior management of the National Healthcare Group (front row, seated).

NHG Awards 2019

At the National Healthcare Group (NHG) Awards Ceremony on 24 May 2019, 41 dedicated healthcare professionals and 13 teams across NHG who went the extra mile received honours from Guest of Honour and NHG Chairman, Madam Kay Kuok.

We are proud of the following staff and teams of IMH who took home various awards:



All smiles from the IMH award recipients together with senior management.

NHG OUTSTANDING CITIZENSHIP AWARD

A/Prof Swapna Kamal Verma, Senior Consultant, Department of Psychosis & Chief, East Region

Ting Mei See, Director, Corporate Communications

YOUNG ACHIEVER AWARD

Teo Ginnyueh, Principal Medical Social Worker, Medical Social Work

Dr Li Ziqiang, Nurse Educator, Nursing

EDUCATION LEADER AWARD

A/Prof Clare Yeo, Senior Principal Clinical Psychologist, Department of Psychology

TEAM RECOGNITION AWARD (SILVER)

“Beyond healthcare, achieving health and maintaining wellness: Slow Stream Psychiatric Rehabilitation Programme, Ward 53AB”

Led by Dr Alex Su, Vice Chairman, Medical Board (Clinical Quality); Senior Consultant & Chief, Recovery Care

“An Integrated Dermatology Service for Long-stay Patients in IMH”
Led by Jolina Chua, Deputy Director, Medical Care Operations (IMH) and Dr Pan Jiun Yit, Senior Consultant, National Skin Centre

TEAM RECOGNITION AWARD (BRONZE)

The Hut

Led by Serlina Eng, Senior Case Manager, East Region

Healthcare Humanity Awards 2019

At the 16th Healthcare Humanity Awards (HHA) on 25 April 2019, IMH Senior Case Manager Serlina Eng and youth volunteer Jonathan Kuek were lauded for displaying altruism above and beyond their call of duty to help others. 83 awardees from public healthcare institutions, and intermediate and long-term care providers received the HHA in all.



Serlina received the award for her endeavours to improve patients' well-being. She set up "The Hut" in 2017, after learning that many patients were seeking a safe and comforting space for respite on occasions when they felt troubled.

Jonathan started volunteering with IMH in January 2014, and pioneered the "Matchsticks" volunteer group to encourage youths to visit IMH patients regularly. Along with his fellow volunteers, he organises social activities for long-stay patients who have no or few relatives.



Prof Chua Hong Choon (picture credit: NTUC)

Chief Executive Officer of IMH, Prof Chua Hong Choon was awarded the Medal of Commendation at the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) May Day Awards 2019. Organised by NTUC, the annual May Day awards salutes individuals who embody the spirit of the Labour Movement through their excellent service and outstanding contributions.

Hope through the OCD Network

While on a training programme in London in 2017, two clinical psychologists from the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) came across a voluntary support group for persons with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and their caregivers. This inspired them to start a similar group in Singapore to cater to the local community.

In April 2018, the OCD Network was formed, comprising 17 members that included staff from IMH and Clarity Singapore, clients and caregivers. Within a year, the number of members quickly doubled to 35 and is still growing in strength today.

The OCD Network provides support for caregivers and clients across different age groups through monthly meetings and outings. Through these sessions, caregivers are able to share their experiences and learn from one another. Clients are also encouraged to live healthily through participation in games and excursions to nature parks. Calvin (pseudonym), a client, shared,



Haanusia Prithivi Raj, Senior Clinical Psychologist from the Department of Developmental Psychiatry speaking on psychotherapy for children and adolescents with OCD.

"Through the OCD Network, I'm able to meet people whom I can identify with and hence I feel less isolated. I also used to think that people may judge me based on my condition, but after interacting with volunteers from the network, I realised it was a misconception on my part. That has encouraged me to open up more to others."

The OCD Network also organises educational talks for the public to raise awareness of the condition. The most recent forum held

at the National University of Singapore attracted more than 400 participants. If you are interested to join the OCD Network or know of someone who may benefit from its programmes, please e-mail ocdnetwork@clarity-singapore.org or www.ocdnetworksg.com.

With Acceptance Comes Awareness

Michelle Lai

With acceptance, comes awareness. I understand this truth very well because it took me 10 years to accept that I have Schizoaffective Disorder. It was only after I accepted my condition that I saw my quality of life improve.

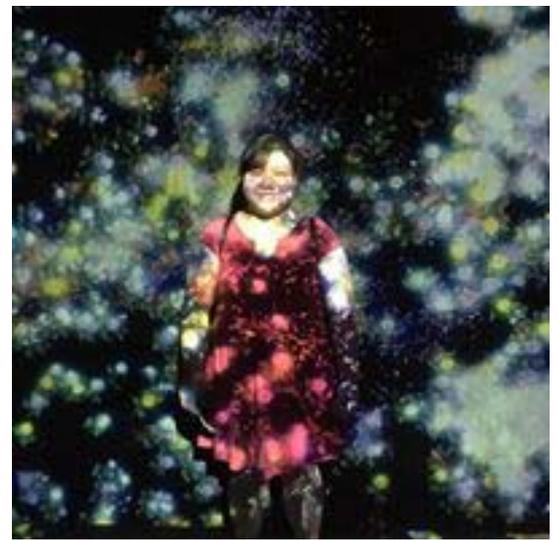
My turning point came after my last relapse, when my uncle showed me a video of myself being very unwell in the hospital. When I watched the video, I could not recognise myself and what I was doing or saying. At that point, I was still suspicious of the people around me, and I accused my mum of admitting me to the hospital to persecute me. For the first time, that video made me see myself from the point of view of others.

I started to recognise that I have a medical condition, and that I wanted to get well and improve my life. I cooperated with my doctor to adjust my medication, and sought counselling and cognitive

behaviour therapy. I read up on my condition, and I requested to have a monthly injection instead of daily oral medication because my previous relapses were all due to my non-compliance with my medication plan.

As my medication started to work, I started to become aware of my emotions and triggers, and made notes of emergency plans as well as my warning signs of relapse in my handphone. I started to get better physically, emotionally and cognitively, and I could communicate to others about my needs clearly.

Now I know that if I ever hear voices again and think that people are out to persecute me, I will look back on my experiences and know that people are not out to harm me, and that the only person in the way of my recovery is myself.



9th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
- TOGETHER AGAINST STIGMA

Beyond The Label
**Towards
An Inclusive
Society**

3 - 5 Oct 2019
Marina Bay Sands Singapore



REGISTRATION IS
NOW OPEN!

ENJOY EARLY BIRD
RATES BEFORE
1 AUG 2019



The Together Against Stigma conference is an international platform to discuss stigma issues that continue to plague people with mental health conditions, preventing them from seeking help, gaining acceptance in society and leading a productive life that they deserve. Uniting against mental health stigma, the global community looks forward to keeping abreast of the latest developments, research outcomes and best practices in this field.



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IN SUPPORT OF THE **Beyond the label** MOVEMENT

Organized by:



Singapore Psychiatric Association

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www.nams.sg All Addictions Helpline (6-RECOVER) 6-7326837



What is found in a cigarette?

Cigarette smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, of which at least 69 are known to cause cancer. Nicotine, a chemical found in cigarette smoke, is the reason why smokers become addicted to smoking and find it hard to quit.

Why is nicotine so addictive?

Nicotine is an extremely addictive chemical. The mechanism of the cigarette ensures its delivery to the brain within seconds. Nicotine causes pleasurable effects on the brain, which then sustains the smoking behaviour. Over time, the smoker needs to smoke an increasingly larger number of cigarettes to achieve the same pleasurable effect. This often occurs together with unpleasant withdrawal symptoms when the blood nicotine level falls, and the smoker begins to crave for a cigarette to stop such unpleasant sensations. When this happens, an addictive pattern is established.

I only smoke a few sticks of cigarettes a day, so I don't think I am addicted.

Although not all who smoke are addicted to nicotine, smoking even one cigarette a day is harmful to health. Social smokers who smoke one cigarette a day are placing themselves at an increased risk of stroke and heart disease. Furthermore, smoking endangers others around them through second-hand smoke. Hence, social smokers should quit smoking too.

I have been smoking for many years now and have failed to quit previously. Should I still try to quit smoking?

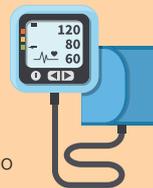
Some people may have tried to quit smoking previously but failed despite several attempts. Others may have tried quitting without the necessary support, or tried to use nicotine replacement therapy on their own incorrectly. A person has better chances of quitting smoking with proper support that includes counselling and pharmacological treatment such as Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) or medications.

The lesser a person smokes, the lower his risk of cancers and the better his mental and physical health. His physical stamina will improve, he may find himself coughing less and also enjoy a better quality of life with more savings.

QUIT SMOKING NOW:

Quitting smoking has almost immediate benefits on physical health. **Knowing what these are may encourage you to keep going if the symptoms of nicotine withdrawal seem unbearable.**

After 20 minutes, your heart rate and blood pressure go down.



After 2 weeks to 3 months, your blood circulation and lung function substantially improve.

After 5 years, your risk of stroke falls to that of a non-smoker.

After 12 hours, the carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.

After 1 to 9 months, coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath decrease.

After 10 years, your risk of death from lung cancer is halved compared to a smoker's.

After 72 hours, breathing feels easier as your bronchial tubes start to relax.

After 1 year, your risk of heart attack is half that of someone who still smokes.



After 15 years, your risk of heart attack is the same as someone who has never smoked.

(Credit: Lifewise, April-June 2019 issue)

What help is available for someone who wants to quit smoking?

Persons who want to quit smoking can seek help with the pharmacists at any restructured hospitals or polyclinics, as well as take part in the Health Promotion Board's "I Quit" programme.

At the National Addictions Management Service (NAMS), our multidisciplinary team of counsellors, pharmacists, doctors and medical social workers work together to help smokers quit smoking. This is done through a variety of methods which may include NRT, medications and counselling, where we work with the patient to determine his schedule for quitting. To achieve a better chance of success, treatment is individualised to the patient's lifestyle. Patients are also given regular follow-up sessions with the doctor and counsellor to monitor treatment progression.

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