



President Halimah Yacob joins in a teambuilding activity.

President urges employers to be open to hiring persons with mental illness

It has been 10 years since President Halimah Yacob (then MP for Jurong GRC and Deputy Sec-Gen of the NTUC) officially opened Job Club at IMH. In July, she was back at the Job Club to learn more about its progress and hold a dialogue with some of its clients.

In the span of a decade, Job Club has placed about 2,800 clients into the open job market. While Job Club has expanded its job database, most of the jobs are blue-collared in nature, in the fields of F&B, retail and cleaning.

Speaking to the media at the side-lines of the dialogue, President Halimah urged more employers to step up and offer "quality jobs" to those with mental health issues. She added that there are many people suffering from mental health issues who are very well-qualified and need better jobs.

President Halimah also had a candid conversation with 24 participants – comprising Job Club clients, employers, caregivers and peer support specialists – in a closed-door dialogue. One issue raised was the general lack of understanding of mental health conditions, despite more outreach and awareness. This lack of understanding breeds fear, perpetuates stigma and deters conversations about mental health issues.

At a broader level, it affects how employers and co-workers view persons with mental health conditions and their ability to engage in gainful employment.

Being employed is empowering, especially to persons in recovery as it boosts their self-worth and confidence. There is thus a need to continually educate employers and encourage them to employ persons in recovery.

Besides employers, co-workers play a critical role in creating a supportive and inclusive work environment so that persons in recovery do not feel out of place or stigmatised at work.

One employer, Mr Jeffery Tan, group general counsel for Jardine Cycle & Carriage and chief executive officer of Mindset Care, shared about his experience as an employer, "Many of us have struggled with mental health at some point in our lives, even if we were not being diagnosed. Jardine has been supportive of reintegration through employment and raising awareness, we hope the whole ecosystem of the workforce can be more compassionate towards those with mental health issues and provide opportunities for them to attain meaningful employment and assistance."

This is also why work for the Job Club continues even after a client has been placed in a job. A common challenge is that supervisors, especially if they are new, are not familiar with a client's condition or signs to look out for. So Job Club's occupational therapists and vocational specialists will be on site to educate them on how to better support the clients.

About the Job Club

This one-stop vocational rehabilitation service aims to help individuals with mental health conditions to integrate back to the workforce, and thereby help in their recovery journey. Its Occupational Therapists and Vocational Specialists work with both employers and clients to ensure job fit before placing the client out. When a client starts work, the team continues to provide support by liaising with employers and clients through phone call follow-ups and job-site visitations.

The Job Club welcomes employers keen to learn more or explore collaborations. They can contact us at Tel: 6389 2678 or Email: enquiries@jobclub.sg / www.jobclub.sg

Dedicated to Serve



IMH Chief Nurse Samantha Ong received the President's Award for Nurses at the Istana on 24 July. The award is the highest honour in Singapore's nursing profession, recognising outstanding nurses who have gone beyond their call of duty and made impactful contributions to the profession and community.

Samantha has dedicated 33 years of her nursing career to caring for patients and leading the transformation of nursing services in IMH. This includes empowering nurses to foster collective leadership, decision-making and to promote nursing autonomy. As a strong advocate for recovery and rehabilitation, she has also been involved in introducing various programmes to help patients reintegrate to the community.

The Nurses' Merit Awards 2019



(From left): SAN Sim Thiam Hee, APN/SNC Saralla, SNE Xie Huiting, SSN Win Min Htet and NM Yuan Peng.

Five nurses from IMH received the Nurses' Merit Award from Minister for Health Mr Gan Kim Yong on 17 July. The awards recognise nurses for their outstanding performance and dedication to the nursing profession.

- Yuan Peng, Nurse Manager
- Saralla D/O Arunasalam, Advanced Practice Nurse & Senior Nurse Clinician
- Sim Thiam Hee, Senior Assistant Nurse
- Win Min Htet, Senior Staff Nurse
- Xie Huiting, Senior Nurse Educator

IMH Celebrates Nurses' Day 2019 – Pearls of Healthcare

IMH celebrated Nurses' Day on 2 August, with Senior Minister of State for Law and Health Mr Edwin Tong gracing the event as guest of honour. The ocean-themed celebrations began with speeches by IMH CEO Prof Chua Hong Choon and SMS Tong on the importance of nursing and commending nurses for overcoming adversities in the course of their work. Nineteen awards were presented to individuals and teams, with the highest accolade (Nightingale Award) presented to Nurse Clinician Hu Xiaomei. The event ended off with a surprise tribute to Chief Nurse Samantha Ong to honour her receiving the President's Award for Nurses this year.



SMS Tong with the Organising Committee.



NC Hu Xiaomei receiving the Nightingale Award from SMS Tong.



CN Samantha Ong received a bouquet of flowers from SMS Tong and a sash reading 'World's Best Chief Nurse' from IMH CEO Prof Chua.



One for the album - awardees with Senior Management of IMH.

Depression: Coping with Transitions



Caregivers Alliance and Clarity Singapore on site to raise awareness on various help avenues.



Q&A session with (from left to right) Dr Mok Yee Ming, senior consultant and chief, Dr Christopher Chan, consultant, Ms Jessica Chan, senior medical social worker, Ms Jerlyn Tan, peer support specialist and Mr Lim Wee Oon, senior clinical psychologist.

Major depressive disorder is one of the top three mental health disorders in Singapore. According to the Singapore Mental Health Study 2016, major depressive disorder was the most common with one in 16 people in Singapore having had the condition at some point in their lifetime.

As part of efforts to educate the public and shed light on the condition, a team of healthcare professionals from IMH's department of mood and anxiety organised a public forum, "Depression: Coping with Transitions" at the Theatre in Tan Tock Seng Hospital. About 100 people attended the forum on 13 July 2019.

Dr Christopher Chan, consultant, Mr Lim Wee Onn, senior clinical psychologist and Ms Jessica Chan, senior medical social worker,

took turns to educate the public on how to cope with the challenges and stresses of dealing with transitions in life. Topics such as depression in middle age, the difference between a midlife crisis and depression and different cycles in life that a person may be in, were covered. The audience also learnt to recognise the signs and symptoms of depression, treatment options and services available in the community. Ms Jerlyn Tan, a peer support specialist, shared her lived experience with the audience, allowing them to gain insights into the illness.

The session was followed by an engaging question-and-answer session chaired by Dr Mok Yee Ming, senior consultant and chief of the department of mood and anxiety in IMH.



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IMH → Hougang MRT : 9.45am - 3.30pm

Hougang MRT pick-up point : Taxi stand outside UOB



A Blessing in Disguise

Amos T.

Five years ago, the term 'mental health' was absent from my vocabulary. 'Health' as I knew was physical. Pushing myself to meet the unrelenting high standards I set for myself was okay as long as I did not fall 'ill'.

Unknowingly, pressure from all areas – academic, athletic and social – was slowly making me 'ill', mentally ill.

I was diagnosed with major depressive disorder in late 2017.

I remember looking up my psychology textbook for the diagnostic criteria. Low moods, check. Loss of interest and motivation, check. Insomnia, check. Thoughts of wanting to sleep and not wake up, check... Am I depressed? Do I really have a mental illness? No, it can't be. I don't have a mental illness. That was the lie I kept telling myself, until one day - I broke.

Looking back, it is clear to me now – a life full of vigor, optimism and enthusiasm had slowly turned a gloomy shade of grey. Life became meaningless and, in the wake of a failed relationship, I lost all hope.

Thankfully, my school counsellor brought me to the A&E on the morning when I decided that I could not go on with life anymore.

The following months were not easy. I struggled with daily routine. But thanks to medication, therapy, and support from family, mentors, friends and fellow peers, thoughts of wanting to end my life went away and I saw light again.

Today, I can say with absolute certainty that I am not only living but thriving in recovery. Depression was my blessing in disguise; emerging from it, I have found purpose in life – to share my recovery story and help others overcome similar struggles.

To those out there struggling, know that it is not the end of the road; help is

out there. Reaching out is not a sign of weakness, but an act of bravery and strength. Life can be better than you imagine if you learn to accept your condition and accept help. Trust me, for I am, among many others, a living testament of these words.



9th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
- TOGETHER AGAINST STIGMA

Beyond The Label
**Towards
An Inclusive
Society**

3 - 5 Oct 2019
Marina Bay Sands Singapore



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.



CONTACT US
TAS 2019 Secretariat
Email: againststigma@imh.com.sg
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IN SUPPORT OF THE **Beyond the label** MOVEMENT

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Schizophrenia

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What is schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a mental illness characterised by a number of symptoms which affects cognition, perception and emotion. Persons with schizophrenia have difficulty distinguishing what is real from what is not. They may be unable to think logically and may have trouble relating to other people.

The condition often occurs in the young, mostly around 21 years of age. The onset is earlier in men (between 15 and 25 years) and later in women (between 25 – 35 years).

What causes schizophrenia?

It is a complex disorder which arises from a combination of risk factors including genetic vulnerability, and environmental factors like childhood trauma and stress. These factors can cause changes in brain chemicals, called neurotransmitters, which are primarily responsible for the symptoms associated with schizophrenia. Although a large number of patients with schizophrenia have parents who do not have the disorder, the lifetime risk is 13% for a child who has one parent with schizophrenia and 35-40% for one who has both parents with the condition.

What are the common signs and symptoms of schizophrenia?

A person with schizophrenia may present the following symptoms:

- Hallucinations such as hearing voices, seeing things and experiencing smells, touch, or taste, that do not exist or are actually not present
- Delusions, like a sense of being controlled or being persecuted, which do not go away no matter how much evidence to the contrary is given

- Difficulty in expressing emotions
- Lack of drive and energy, which results in academic, vocational and social deterioration
- Lack of pleasure in or interest in life
- Social withdrawal
- Disturbances in speech, thinking and behaviour which is not in keeping with a person's normal behaviour and which is difficult for others to comprehend
- Impairment in attention, reasoning and judgment and difficulty in processing information

How can family members and friends help?

Family members and friends can watch out for change in behaviours. Any of the above mentioned symptoms can occur, and if they are able to detect them quickly and bring the person for treatment, it will help in better recovery, outcome and functioning.

How is schizophrenia treated?

The management of schizophrenia should take a holistic and multidisciplinary approach. The type and range of intervention are specific to the different phases of the illness. Since the symptoms are caused primarily by the imbalances of brain chemicals, medication remains the gold standard of treatment. Different antipsychotics are used and the dose is optimised based on the effectiveness and side effects of the medication in an individual. Electro-convulsive therapy, different forms of psychotherapy, family and occupational therapy, rehabilitation programmes, referral to peer support specialists also help in alleviating the symptoms and giving people with schizophrenia a better quality of life.

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