



From top left, anti-clockwise:

1. Guest of Honour, President Halimah Yacob (centre, with pink bouquet) with Prof Chua Hong Choon, CEO of IMH, Mr Lee Chow Soon, Chairman of WHCF, Prof Phillip Choo, Group CEO of National Healthcare Group, and all concert performers on stage during the finale. **2.** Sing! China runner-up and guest singer Joanna Dong performing her jazz-getai fusion medley. **3.** Getai Queen Audrey Luo and her dance troupe showing off their talents as they try to sing off their jazz competitors. **4.** IMH nurse Haizad Imram singing and grooving with his beautiful wife, Alia Demelda. **5.** Local household name Suhaimi Yusof making his maiden attempt at singing a Mandarin song. **6.** Singing psychiatrist Dr Alex Su mesmerising the audience with his soulful singing.

Local celebs sing for a good cause – IMH raises more than \$1 million for the Woodbridge Hospital Charity Fund

The Institute of Mental Health (IMH) turned 90 this year! As part of its year-long celebrations, IMH held its “Diva vs Queen” fundraising concert at the Esplanade Concert Hall on 27 October 2018. Adding a fun twist to the concert that featured Jazz-pop and Getai repertoires, two distinctive groups of local artistes battled it out with songs from both genres. Every performer showed off their stunning vocals and kept the Guest of Honour, President Halimah Yacob and the 1200-strong audience entertained with their visual flamboyance and hilarious stage banter. The concert ended on a high note with local singing sensation Joanna Dong, who ended the battle with a medley of songs that fused Jazz-pop and Getai. All were declared winners in the end!

Proceeds from ticket sales went to the Woodbridge Hospital Charity Fund (WHCF) that supports client rehabilitation and

employment, caregiver training, patient welfare, advocacy and education, and mental health innovation and research. Thanks to everyone’s great support, IMH raised \$1.05 million through ticket sales and corporate and individual donations!

More than S\$400,000 a year is needed to sustain ongoing programmes and to develop new initiatives to promote recovery, well-being, and successful integration in the community. To make a donation to WHCF, you may scan the QR code to donate via Giving.sg or mail your cheque, made out to Woodbridge Hospital Charity Fund, to:

Corporate Communications Department
Institute of Mental Health
10 Buangkok View
Singapore 539747
(Attention: Sum Foong Yee)

Corporate Volunteerism at IMH



IMH staff and patients from the slow-stream rehabilitation ward with Mr Tan Chuan-Jin (in yellow shirt), Speaker of Parliament of Singapore who was the Guest of Honour at Maybank's Global Corporate Responsibility (CR) Day 2018. Our patients were invited to set up a booth to sell their signature vegetable produce, cultivated at their hydroponics farm in IMH.

IMH counts some 400 individuals and volunteer groups among its regular volunteers, who faithfully dedicate their time to enlivening our long-stay patients' lives. What is lesser known is that there are also many notable organisations who have partnered with IMH over the past few years as corporate volunteers. These organisations have worked with us to host meaningful engagements for their employees and our patients.

Maybank Singapore came on board as one of IMH's corporate volunteers in 2016. Their objectives were to enhance the patients' living surroundings, and also to support rehabilitation, social integration and acceptance of persons with mental health conditions.

Since then, staff of Maybank Singapore have painted a total of 18 wall murals and sponsored the first hydroponics garden in IMH, which was used to provide gardening therapy for patients who had potential for rehabilitation and discharge. They have also conducted telematches and carnivals for IMH patients, brought them on outings to Gardens by the Bay and farmer's markets, etc. Most recently this year, they sought to further enrich our patients' lives by bringing them for skills-based activities relevant for rehabilitation, such as learning baking at a

café and enhancing their hydroponics cultivation skills at Citizen Farm.

These corporate volunteers shared that their understanding of persons with mental illness had increased significantly after these opportunities to interact with them. "My team mates and I are glad that the patients have benefitted from our volunteer efforts. We are also amazed to find out more about the ways in which IMH has equipped their patients with useful skills such as handicraft and gardening, which improve their self-esteem," commented Mr David Tan, Maybank IT Manager.



Maybank staff helping to sell vegetables grown and harvested by our patients.

LIPS receives Singapore Patient Volunteer Group Award 2018

The Ladies in the Power of Service (LIPS) was started in November 2012 by six foreign domestic helpers who wanted to spend their rest days in a more meaningful way. Through word of mouth, the group quickly grew to a diverse group of 51 volunteers, represented by different nationalities. Every week without fail for the past six years, LIPS has willingly traded their off days to put smiles on the faces of IMH patients from the long-stay wards. They conduct recreational activities such as art and craft, mahjong, birthday celebrations, and singing and dancing. Congratulations to LIPS for their dedication to our patients!

Understanding and Supporting Mental Health

In celebration of World Mental Health Day this year, the Agency for Integrated Care, Institute of Mental Health, National Council of Social Service, MINDSET Care Limited and over 30 community partners came together to raise awareness and understanding of mental health in Singapore.



Dr Koh Poh Koon, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry and MP and Grassroots Adviser for Ang Mo Kio GRC Grassroots Organisations (fourth from left) officiated the launch of the "MindStories" Exhibition on 14 Oct, which kicked off the Mental Health Awareness Singapore Learning Series 2018.

Kicking off the first of five Mental Health Awareness Singapore Learning Series initiatives, a MindStories exhibition was held at Ang Mo Kio Central Stage on 14 October, Sunday.

The exhibition featured anecdotes by 18 persons – including persons in recovery, caregivers and service providers – about their experiences with mental health conditions. Dr Koh Poh Koon, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry, and MP and Grassroots Adviser for Ang Mo Kio GRC Grassroots Organisations, graced the launch of the exhibition.

Dr Koh said, "The events empower the community to

share perspectives, spark ideas, and start conversations on mental health through sharing, experiential and educational learning. It also calls for greater social acceptance of persons in recovery and support for their families."

This marks the first time that community partners in mental health have put together outreach events on such a scale. This learning series sought to foster a better understanding of common mental health issues, and called for a greater social acceptance of persons in recovery and support for their families.

MindStories will be displayed as a roving exhibition in selected libraries at Marine Parade, Ang Mo Kio, Tampines and Chinatown until Dec 31.

For more information, please visit www.facebook.com/MentalHealthAwarenessSG.

In Loving Memory of our Patients

Among the longstay patients in IMH, there are many, especially those who have lost touch with their families, who count IMH as their home to the end of their days. These patients often see staff and volunteers as their substitute family.

Since 2015, IMH has initiated an annual Memorial Service as an opportunity for staff and volunteers to bid a fond farewell to the patients who had touched their lives. This year's Memorial Service was held on 19 November 2018. Fifty IMH staff and family members of departed patients gathered to remember their loved ones who passed away in 2018. IMH CEO, Prof Chua Hong Choon opened the service by thanking everyone present for coming together to remember the 18 deceased longstay patients. One family member and eight ward nurses also delivered heartfelt eulogies for the patients whom they had personally cared for.



A patients' choir, Hearts in Harmony, performing 'Irish Blessing' at the Memorial Service, with volunteers Joanne on the harp and Eric (second from left) on vocals.

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Hope for a Brighter Day

Rayner Gooi



What if one day, you encountered an organisation that was hell-bent on your destruction, one that knew your deepest fears and how to use them against you? It had operatives following you around every time you went out, and had control of the media and used it to send you messages to taunt and threaten you. It could even get into your head and project messages 24/7 so that sleep became impossible, and there was no respite.

Welcome to the world of psychosis. Welcome to the world of a person with paranoid schizophrenia. It's a world filled with terror and one which I hope never to visit again.

I was diagnosed with the condition while I was in National Service, but I went off my medication because I felt better. I managed to graduate from NUS after my National Service, but later relapsed and had to be warded. After my discharge from the hospital, I made my way to the UK to read my Law degree and also to leave Singapore, because I felt very threatened and my fears of a conspiracy against me could not be shaken off. While medication may banish the voices

from one's head, the memories linger and the confusion of whether one's experience of psychosis was real or not is difficult to resolve.

However, in the UK, I felt a little safer and a little calmer, thanks in part to a change in my medication. I was able to graduate with a Second Upper, come back and be called to the Bar in Singapore. I have been practising as a lawyer for over a decade now, without any incident.

All that I have managed to do would not have been possible if I was casual or careless about taking my medication. I want patients and caregivers to know that many things are possible with the aid of medication, provided the patient adheres strictly to his regime and sees his doctor regularly to have his condition monitored.

There can be life after schizophrenia, there can be hope for a brighter day. You just have to doggedly hang in there and make sure you take your medication – from my experience, there can be no compromise about this.

Beyond
the label

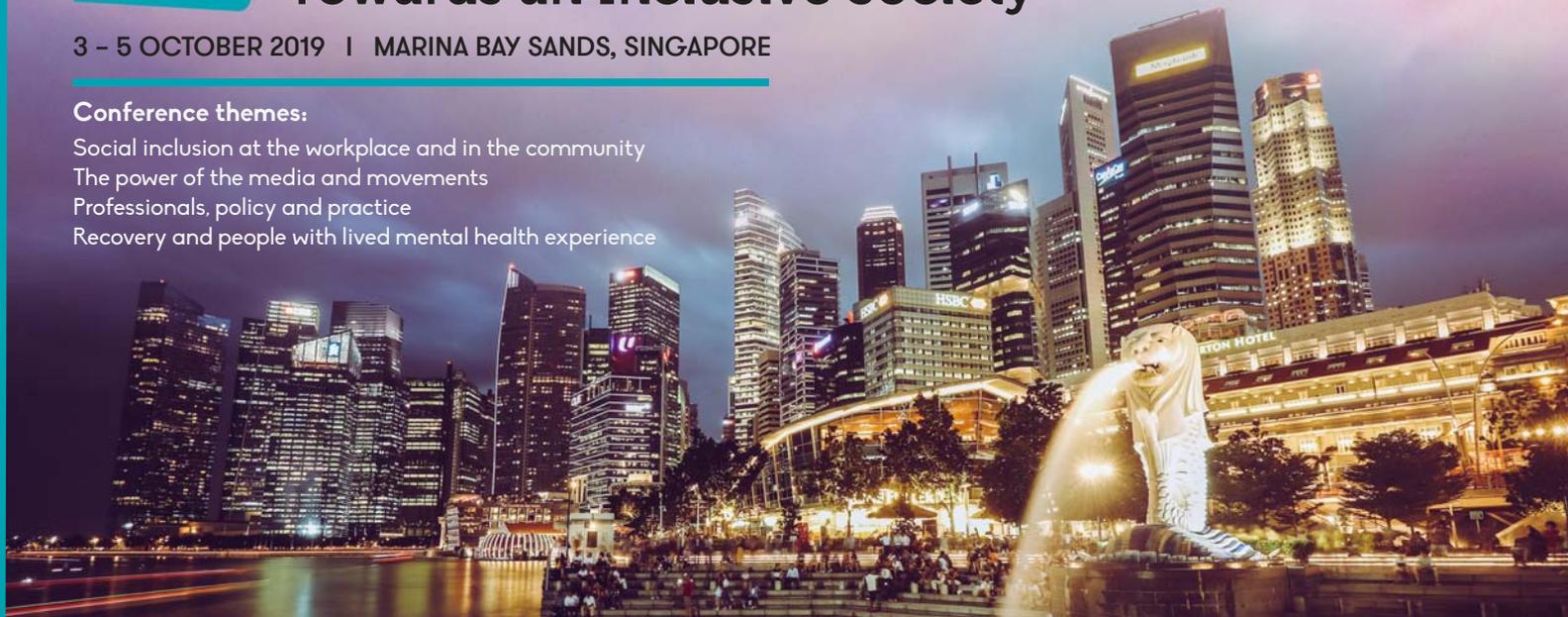
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Holiday Blues

Sam Hui Fang, Senior Clinical Psychologist, IMH

Is it normal to experience “holiday blues”? What are the reasons?

The “holiday blues” is a common phenomenon when people feel stressed or overwhelmed nearing the festive season, which starts towards year-end.

The absence of close connections may be especially difficult to cope with during the season of gatherings. Societal expectations that surround the festive season and what it “should” feel like may create a sense of burden, as we find ourselves caught up in giving gifts as well as the constant socialising. People may feel a sense of loss and end up becoming withdrawn or isolated.

The end of the year is also a time when people look back on their accomplishments in the past year and decide about resolutions for the new year. People who are highly self-critical or already depressed may feel worse during this time if they rate themselves lower in their accomplishments than others would, or blame themselves for not meeting their own or others’ expectations.

What can one do to minimise the holiday blues?

Set realistic expectations. You can reframe your beliefs about what the holidays “should” be like. For instance, you don’t need to feel like you must stay in a gathering from start to finish. Tell yourself that it is ok to leave early if you feel uncomfortable.

Set firm boundaries. Set clear limits about what you are able and willing to do, whether that means declining some invitations, setting your spending budget or choosing to focus on meaningful experiences rather than expense (e.g. spending time with your loved ones or making your own gifts).

Make connections. Meet up with your friends face-to-face instead of communicating through social media. Volunteering at animal shelters, attending community or faith-based events can be good ways of staying connected with others and giving you a sense of purpose.

Minimise rumination. Going over your problems repeatedly does not lead to clear plans about how to solve them. Focus on the reasons why things did not happen instead of dwelling on your shortcomings. Set small, specific and manageable goals.

Keep your own well-being in mind. Self-care is important, including eating and drinking in moderation (as alcohol can worsen a depressed mood), exercising (shown to reduce symptoms of stress and anxiety) and having enough sleep.

Remember that you have a choice. Making a list of reasons why you should or should not engage in certain holiday traditions or gatherings can help to remind yourself that you do have a choice.

How do I know when my holiday blues may have crossed the line, and when professional help is needed? Where should I seek help?

The holiday blues are usually temporary, but it is important to identify when these feelings of low mood have crossed into clinical depression, which is characterised by several of these symptoms – an overall persistent feeling of sadness, loss of interest and pleasure, changes in sleep and appetite, low energy, difficulties with concentration, feelings of worthlessness or guilt and thoughts of ending your life. Clinical depression also impairs daily functioning. For these symptoms, it is often helpful and necessary to seek professional help. You may want to visit a General Practitioner (GP) or your nearest family service centre for more information or to get a referral.

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