FOCUS
Working Together to Help Our Troubled Youths

SNAPSHOTS
Unveiling OcTAVE @ Cantonment
GRIM FACT: MENTAL ILLNESS STRIKES EARLY!

A study conducted by the World Health Organisation shows that 50 percent of youths with mental illness have their onset by the age of 14 years and 75 percent of them by 24 years old. So if you are between the ages of 14 and 29, you are considered to be in the high-risk age group of getting a mental illness.

Schizophrenia and related psychotic disorders are among the most disabling disorders and one of the world’s greatest public health concerns. In Singapore, Schizophrenia ranks ninth (together with breast cancer) among all the various diseases in terms of the burden of disease* due to both premature mortality and disability arising from the disease.

Apart from greater healthcare costs, the disease negatively impacts personal, social and work functioning. There is currently no cure for Schizophrenia and its cause is not fully understood. Thus, it is important to identify and treat those with psychosis as early as possible.

Clinical Associate Professor Chong Siow Ann, Vice-Chairman, Medical Board (Research) and his team of researchers are helming the Longitudinal Youth At-Risk Study (LYRIKS). This is part of the three studies that comprise the Singapore Translational and Clinical Research (TCR) in Neuroscience Flagship Programme. LYRIKS is an extensive study aimed at identifying social, biological, clinical and cognitive factors that are involved in the transition to psychosis in youths.

The study involves recruiting and retaining a large cohort of participants aged between 14 and 29 years of age who would be followed up for a period of two years. This age range represents the age of greatest risk for psychosis.

Funded by the National Research Foundation Singapore, this project has already begun and seeks to partner the community to create change and improve care by working collaboratively with and through community partners with the aim of combining knowledge with action to improve health outcomes.

“We want to be able to help build the capacity of community partners to identify and manage those who are at risk of developing serious mental illness like psychosis through training, consultation, talks, etc. We want to make our research in LYRIKS relevant to them,” said A/Prof Chong.

To date, over 1,700 individuals have been screened for eligibility into the study, of which 162 were found to have the at-risk syndrome for psychosis, and 18 were actually found to be psychotic. These individuals were not previously diagnosed and were not receiving the required help. This figure merely represents the tip of the iceberg as there are many other distressed individuals out there in the community that we hope to reach out to and help.

If you are keen to be part of this worthwhile project, please turn to the back page for more details on LYRIKS.

* The burden of disease uses a summary measure of population health that combines time and years of life lost.

“...a state of mental and emotional disturbance in young people that is often not well recognised despite its common occurrence and this could be a harbinger of psychosis. Many of these individuals are distressed and have impaired functioning like academic difficulties, dropping out of school, social withdrawal, substance abuse and suicidal attempts. It is crucial that we have the means to better identify them to help future generations of such disturbed individuals.”

A/Prof Chong Siow Ann, Vice-Chairman, Medical Board (Research)
The Young and The Troubled
– A Public Forum on Youth Mental Health

BY HANITA ASSUDANI, RESEARCH

More than five hundred people attended the public forum on youth mental health, aptly titled “The Young and The Troubled” held on 9 January. The speakers - Australian of the Year 2010, Prof. Patrick McGorry, Executive Director, Orygen Youth Health, Australia, A/Prof. Chong Siow Ann, Vice-Chairman Medical Board (Research) and Senior Consultant, IMH, and Mrs Tan-Lee Yoke Yin, Deputy Director, Samaritans of Singapore, spoke about the early warning indicators of mental problems in youth, how the public could help friends or family members who are in need and shared some programmes that are available to these youths.

What really made the event a resounding success was that during the panel discussion, several members of the public bravely stepped up to share personal stories about friends and family who have suffered from mental illness. Overall, the participants returned home with a much better understanding of youth mental health, and how they can play their part. The event was organised by the Research Division of IMH and supported by the National Medical Research Council.

Panel speakers Prof McGorry and A/Prof Chong took eager questions from the ground.

Over 500 participants attended the forum at Suntec Convention Centre.

Dialogue Session on Youth Mental Health Care

BY HANITA ASSUDANI, RESEARCH

Mental health specialists from various community organisations came together on 10 January to discuss issues pertaining to the detection, treatment and continued engagement of youth with mental health problems. The panel included Prof Patrick McGorry, Executive Director, Orygen Youth Health, Australia; A/Prof Chong Siow Ann, Vice-Chairman Medical Board (Research) and A/Prof Swapna Verma, Chief, EPIP. Among the many issues discussed were the problems mental health specialists face in getting youths with emotional or psychological difficulties to seek treatment in a safe environment where they are not stigmatised by their peers. The suggested solutions included empowering the youth to help their own peers such as through befriender programmes, setting up clinical services in a youth-orientated environment or even engaging the youths through community orientated research studies. By the end of the session, the participants were convinced that though mental illness is the chronic illness of youth, they can be empowered to do something about it.

Participants from VWOs and community organisations pose questions to our panelists.

Our panel sharing their expertise and insightful experience.
IMH Gets a New CEO

BY PENNY CHUA, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

In February 2011, IMH witnessed a milestone in its history when Mr Leong Yew Meng handed over the baton to Dr Chua Hong Choon after nine years as the hospital’s Chief Executive Officer. Mr Leong will now focus on his role as CEO of the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics, a post he has concurrently held since December 2009.

“IT HAS BEEN MY PLEASURE TO HAVE WORKED WITH A STELLAR TEAM AT IMH. I AM CONFIDENT THAT IMH WILL CONTINUE TO SHINE AS THE MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTION OF CHOICE UNDER DR CHUA’S CAPABLE LEADERSHIP,” HE SAID.

Before his CEO appointment, Dr Chua was Senior Consultant and Vice Chairman Medical Board (Clinical) at IMH. He was first posted to IMH in 1993. A well-respected and dedicated doctor, Dr Chua has received many accolades from patients and their families. He is also a leader and mentor to his fellow colleagues, being active in mental health education and giving frequent lectures and teaching seminars to the public and healthcare professionals.

Dr Chua shared that he looks forward to the challenges of leading IMH and to further improve the quality of care for patients. “ONE OF MY PRIORITIES IS TO WORK WITH OUR PARTNERS TO FURTHER DEVELOP COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES,” HE SAID. “IMH IS PROUD OF ITS HISTORY OF SERVING THE MENTAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF SINGAPORE FOR MORE THAN 80 YEARS. IT IS MY PERSONAL GOAL TO KEEP IMH EVER RESPONSIVE TO SINGAPORE’S MENTAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS AND TO NURTURE MORE MENTAL HEALTH WORKERS IN THE FUTURE.”

“I WISH THE VERY BEST TO YEW MENG IN HIS ONGOING RESPONSIBILITIES AT NHG Polyclinics and would also like to acknowledge his significant role in the past decade in establishing IMH as the leading mental health care organisation in Singapore and the region,” Dr Chua added.

Dr Chua (left) presenting Mr Leong the Chinese scroll with well wishes from IMH HODs.

Staff mingling with Mr Leong

Dr Chua Hong Choon, IMH’s new CEO.
IMH Doctor Brings Mental Health Training to Rural India

BY PENNY CHUA, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

He has a mission to use his expertise to help improve mental healthcare in rural India. Meet Dr Dhanesh Kumar, consultant from the department of General Psychiatry, IMH, who conducts regular training to empower and equip the Indian community to provide mental healthcare in remote villages.

Every month, he returns to his hometown in Sangaria, a sub-district in Rajasthan which is about 350km from Delhi. A typical trip sees Dr Kumar taking a five-and-a-half hour flight from Singapore to Delhi and enduring a seven-hour overnight taxi ride from Delhi to Sangaria.

With a population of more than 45,000, Sangaria is also known as an education hub as it churns out many doctors and engineers every year. Dr Kumar is one of these successful scholars and he hopes to give back to the community in the field that he specialises in - psychiatry.

Working with two other local psychiatrists, he trains doctors, healthcare workers, community leaders and volunteers, teachers, and even faith healers. Dr Kumar’s programme eventually benefits a total population of about 145,000, including the surrounding villages. The villagers are superstitious and mental illness is still perceived as a spiritual issue. Overcoming stigma, ignorance and superstitions are key to getting the population to seek treatment.

Dr Kumar conducts his training, which focuses on community awareness, capacity building and accessibility to support services, in the native Hindi language. Since January 2011, he has reached out to more than 150 participants.

Dr Kumar’s work was given a shot in the arm recently when he was awarded a US$10,000 funding from the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Programme in the United States to expand his work.

We wish Dr Kumar all the best with this meaningful endeavour to bring positive change to the Sangaria community.

Congrats A/Prof Swapna on Your Academic Promotion!

BY DEBORAH KOH, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

Our heartiest congratulations to Associate Professor Swapna Verma, Chief, Department of Early Psychosis Intervention (EPIP) on her recent academic promotion by Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School, Singapore. A/Prof Swapna was also awarded Outstanding Educator in Psychiatry for 2009 and Outstanding Leadership in Psychiatry for 2009 and 2010.

A/Prof Swapna has been teaching Duke-NUS medical students of Years 1, 2, and 4. She was previously an Assistant Professor for two years and her promotion to Associate Professor was based on her contribution in the areas of education at Duke-NUS and her research work.

She introduced a new clerkship model for Year 2 students during their Psychiatry rotation where they get hands-on experience of being a part of an inpatient multidisciplinary team during their two weeks stint in IMH.

“I hope my experience in India can bring some insights to community based programmes in Singapore, and likewise, my experience at IMH and in Singapore can help me improve my programme in India.”

Dr Dhanesh Kumar (above, extreme left)

“Participating in the daily ward rounds provide these students an opportunity to listen to their teacher’s own clinical reasoning, exposes them to the ambiguity and ambivalence inherent in clinical medicine and most importantly, watch first-hand the doctor-patient interaction that is core to the experience of being a doctor,”

A/Prof Swapna (left)
Ask the Expert

ARTICLE CONTRIBUTED BY
THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC GUARDIAN,
A DIVISION OF MCYS

Protect Your Interests with a Lasting Power of Attorney

Our ability to make decisions can be hindered by a debilitating accident or illness. The Mental Capacity Act empowers individuals to plan in advance for such an eventuality.

What happens if you lose the mental capacity to make your own decisions? Who should take charge of your personal welfare, and what happens to your financial affairs then? To protect the interests of those who have lost mental capacity and have become vulnerable, the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) introduced the Mental Capacity Act which came into effect on 1 March 2010. The Act is administered by the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG), a Division within MCYS.

What is the Mental Capacity Act and what does it do?
The Mental Capacity Act enables adults to plan ahead and gives them the power to make choices for their future in the event they should lose their mental capacity. This is done through a legal document – a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA). Through an LPA, an individual specifies powers to be granted to an appointed person(s) he trusts in two broad areas: personal welfare as well as property and affairs matters.

What is the Lasting Power of Attorney?
It is a legal document which allows a person who is at least 21 years of age (the ‘donor’) and who has mental capacity, to voluntarily appoint one or more persons (‘donee[s]’) he trusts to act and make decisions on his behalf if he should lose mental capacity one day.

What are the benefits of making an LPA?
Life is unpredictable. An accident, while carrying on with the normal routines of everyday life, can cause one to lose mental capacity quite unexpectedly – at the workplace, at home, while commuting or during travels overseas. An individual can also lose mental capacity as a result of a stroke or dementia. To protect our personal interests, and for our family and loved ones, it is wise to pre-plan for life’s eventualities.

What happens when a person loses his mental capacity?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>If a person has made an LPA</th>
<th>If a person has NOT made an LPA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He would have indicated his personal choice of a trusted proxy decision maker;</td>
<td>A proxy decision maker will be appointed by the Court;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His proxy decision maker would automatically be able to step forward to act on his behalf;</td>
<td>The procedure of having a proxy decision maker appointed on his behalf will involve the hassle of court procedures which will incur costs in terms of time and resources, ie, legal fees etc;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His family and loved ones would have greater certainty and peace of mind knowing that he has personally appointed a proxy decision maker.</td>
<td>In the absence of a proxy decision maker, there could be greater strain and stress on family and loved ones.</td>
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Keen to find out more?
The OPG conducts free workshops for members of the public. For more details, you can check the OPG website at www.publicguardian.gov.sg. You may also call the OPG hotline at 1800-226-6222 or email: enquiry@publicguardian.gov.sg if you have any queries.
IMH Hosts South West CDC
Mayor Dr Amy Khor

BY BUNDLE GOH, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

In January 2011, IMH played host to Dr Amy Khor, Mayor, South West District, staff and District Councillors from the South-West Community Development Council (CDC). The objective was to help the Mayor and her team to better understand the services available at IMH and to explore how the CDC could partner our hospital to support residents with mental health problems.

Dr Amy Khor and her team learning more about IMH’s services from the hospital’s senior management.

Organic Garden Brings Patients and Volunteers Together

BY BUNDLE GOH, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

On 30 January, Mr Charles Chong, Adviser to Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC, officially launched “Nurtureville”, an organic garden nestled in the midst of the greenery in IMH. Here, local vegetables such as kailan, kangkong, xiao bai chye and cherry tomatoes are grown in a soy bean-based compost that is devoid of pesticides and harmful chemicals.

The concept for the organic garden was jointly proposed to IMH in July 2010 by the Sengkang Women’s Executive Committee, Sengkang Youth Executive Committee as well as the Environmental Club at NTU. Together with students from Compassvale Secondary School, this group of more than 30 volunteers comes together on Sundays to do gardening and to interact with the patients.

Mr Chong told reporters at the event that many people are still ignorant of the fact that a vast majority of mental illnesses are treatable and can be managed with proper help and treatment. He said, “One way to clear misconceptions is to bring the community to the hospital and let them interact with the patients. Hopefully, with greater public education, we can change people’s outlook on mental illness.”

In addition to destigmatising mental illness, activities such as these help to enrich the lives of our long stay patients and give them an opportunity to get close to nature while getting to know new friends.

If you are keen to help out in this activity, please email to volunteer@imh.com.sg.

IMH CEO Dr Chua Hong Choon (left) and Mr Charles Chong (second from right) harvesting organic vegetables.

Mr Charles Chong (left) and IMH CEO Dr Chua Hong Choon (second from left) posing with their harvested vegetables along with grassroots leaders from Sengkang.
New Year Celebrations

The Lunar New Year is a time of celebration, feasting and reunion for most of us and it is no exception for our patients. With the efforts of staff and volunteers, the festive mood was brought into the wards for those patients who were unable to be home with their families. We bring you the highlights of the occasion…

* IMH has about 1600 in-patients, of which 1100 are long stay patients. If you are keen to volunteer, please visit the IMH website for more details or email to volunteers@imh.com.sg.

Duke-NUS medical students combining voices as they crooned CNY songs for ward 66A patients.

Look! Even the God of Prosperity made a special appearance to bring well wishes to our delighted patients.

What a treat! Patients enjoying the songs at the Huayi Festival of Chinese Art at the Esplanade Open theatre.

Our volunteers from The Achievers kicked off the celebration with a joyous concert for our patients.

For the first time, our staff from the forensic ward organised a meaningful celebration for the patients to usher in the new year with hope and aspiration.

CNY is also celebrated by our multi-racial group of patients in Wd 54.

Appreciative patients receiving red packets from Mr Ben Keswick, Group Managing Director, Jardine Cycle & Carriage Ltd.

Our Community Mental Health Team bringing a touch of festivity to our patients.

IMH CEO Dr Chua Hong Choon (2nd from left) and senior management tossing prosperity yusheng with our patients in Wd 44A.
Alexandra Day Centre is now OcTAVE @ Cantonment

BY VERA SOO, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

On 21 February, the Alexandra Day Centre made its long-anticipated move from Redhill, where it has been since 1984, to a newly renovated site at Cantonment Road. Together with this relocation, it has also been renamed OcTAVE @ Cantonment for a stronger association with the occupational therapy programme at IMH. IMH’s two other rehabilitation facilities now carry the OcTAVE brand – OcTAVE @ IMH and OcTAVE @ Bukit Batok. The name OcTAVE, stands for “Occupational Therapy: Activities, Vocation and Empowerment”, and reflects the emphasis on patient-centred programmes that provide rehabilitation for people with psychiatric conditions.

The new facility is housed in a double-storey shop house with rooms for patients to engage in craftwork; pick up computer skills; and participate in physical activities such as ball games and simple exercises. As the model of rehabilitation is based on community integration, patients also attend classes for social skills, wellness, peer support, recovery, use of community resources, and cognitive remediation to gain skills that would enable them to live a fuller and more independent life in the community.

OcTAVE @ Cantonment serves about 60 patients daily and takes a customised, patient-centred and flexible approach in goal planning for patients, just like the other two day rehabilitation facilities at IMH and Bukit Batok. For instance, patients may choose the groups or activities they want to join and the frequency of attendance.

This is to recognise that the patient is still a thinking individual despite his or her condition.

Study done at IMH has shown that about 80 percent of patients who underwent a community living skills programme every three months show an improvement from the previous quarter. Furthermore, 71.2 percent of the medium and higher-functioning patients scored more than 64 percent on the Multnomah Community Ability Scale*. This is a strong indication that patients who participate in this programmes at day rehabilitation facilities adapt much better in the community than those who do not.

Psychiatric disorders can impair the ability of patients to perform their roles effectively within the community, but a little help can go a long way.

IMH patients who are interested to participate in the activities at OcTAVE may speak to their attending doctor or allied health professional for a referral.

* The Multnomah Community Ability Scale is a tool to assess how well people with psychiatric disabilities function in the community.

Patients honing their computer skills at OcTAVE.
精神分裂症与相关精神病是最容易导致病人失去生活能力的疾病,也是世界上所有公共卫生部门最关心的问题之一。在新加坡,精神分裂症的疾病负担*(由于该疾病而导致的早丧与残障等)排名第九(跟乳癌同名次)。

除了高昂的医药费,这类疾病也给病人带来个人、社交与工作的负面影响。由于医学界尚未全面解开精神分裂症的病因,因此目前没有根治的方法。所以,精神病必须尽早诊断,及早施药。

LYRIKS是一项全面而广泛的研究计划,旨在找出青少年精神病的社会、生物、临床与认知等方面的致病因素。内容包括招募并持续保有大样本的同质化14岁到29岁的参与者,然后进行为期两年的前瞻性研究,因为这个年龄段是罹患精神病风险最大的年龄层。

该计划由国立研究基金会(National Research Foundation Singapore简称NRFS)赞助,目前已经开始与社区伙伴合作。通过与社区伙伴紧密合作,提升相关护理。主要目的是把知识与行动结合起来,改善医疗效果。

庄绍安副教授说道:“我们能够通过培训、咨询、讲座等活动,培养社区伙伴,协助辨识并管理有严重精神病风险者。我们的LYRIKS研究必须对他们有用。”

截至今日,已有1,700人通过筛选,可参与LYRIKS研究项目;其中162名出现风险综合症状,18名则确诊为精神病患。这些参与者之前从未诊断出精神病,也因此没有获得所需要的协助。然而,这个数字只是冰山一角,社区中还有许多饱受心理问题困扰的人,我们希望能够帮助他们。

如果您有意参与这项深具意义的项目,请翻到最后一页,参阅LYRIKS详情。

* 疾病负担使用关于人口健康估算法,包括正常寿命因罹患疾病所失去的时间和年数。
专家咨询

这篇文章是由社会发展、青年与体育部属下的公共监护人办公室所提供。

订立《持久授权书》，保护您的利益
我们做决定的能力，可能会因为致使心智衰弱的意外或疾病而受损。有了《心智能力法》，人们就能在这种情况下出现之前，提前安排一切。

如果您心智受损而无法独立做决定，该怎么办？
谁来照顾您的个人福利，处理您的财务？为了保护因心智能力受损者利益，社会发展、青年及体育部（Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports: 简称MCYS）积极推动《心智能力法》。该法令于2010年3月1日起已生效，并由社会发展、青年及体育部属下的公共监护人办公室（Office of the Public Guardian: 简称OPG）实施。

《心智能力法》是什么法令，有何作用？
根据《心智能力法》成人可以为将来事先做好安排，通过《持久授权书》（Lasting Power of Attorney: 简称LPA）委任自己信任的人在将来若失去心智能力时，照料他的事宜。通过《持久授权书》，成人可在个人福利和产业与财务事务这两大方面，赋予他信得过的人，代替他做决定的权利。

何谓《持久授权书》？
《持久授权书》是一份法律文件。授权人（必须至少21岁）可自愿性地委任他信任的一人或数人为被授权人。一经委任，授权人万一失去心智能力，被授权人便可替代他做出决定。

订立《持久授权书》有何好处？
人生变幻莫测。有人这一刻还在职场或在家做着再寻常不过的事，或在上班途中，或在海外出差，下一刻就发生了意外，随即失去心智能力。还人可能因为中风或患上痴呆症等疾病而智力受损。为了保护我们的个人利益，为了我们的家人与挚爱的人，预先安排一切是明智之举。

如果心智受损会怎样？

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>如已订立《持久授权书》</th>
<th>如未立下《持久授权书》</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他就已经委任了他可信任的代决策者。</td>
<td>法庭将委任代决策者。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他的代决策者可自动代替他做决定。</td>
<td>若要委任代决策者，有关人士必须上法庭进行法律程序，程序需要花费更多时间与金钱。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他的家人与挚爱的人知道他已指定了代决策者，就不会不知所措，也会更加心安。</td>
<td>如果不事先指定代决策者，家人与挚爱的人所遭受的劳累与压力就会更大。</td>
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</table>

详情：
公共监护人办公室将为公众举办免费工作坊。详情请浏览公共监护人办公室网页：www.publicguardian.gov.sg。如有疑问，也可致电1800-226-6222公共监护人办公室热线或发电邮至：enquiry@publicguardian.gov.sg询问。
Visit IMH Programme

We invite you to embark on a learning journey to learn about the evolution of mental health services in Singapore. We offer an insightful visit programme that allows you to:

- Get a glimpse of patient life
- Be introduced to our facilities
- Debunk myths about the mentally-ill
- Better understand the plight of our patients

We also have a special programme for schools to explore CIP opportunities through volunteer activities.

For visit arrangements, please email:
deborah_pt_koh@imh.com.sg (for corporate visits) or
bundle_sk_goh@imh.com.sg (for school visits)

General visiting hours: Mondays to Fridays
Time: 10:00 am to 5.30 pm