

MEDIA RELEASE

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IMH launches the second national mental health literacy study.

1. The Institute of Mental Health (IMH) is embarking on the second nationwide Mind Matters: A Study of Mental Health Literacy to track changing trends in knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about common mental disorders as well as knowledge and attitudes related to help-seeking and illness management among the Singapore resident population.
2. Mental health literacy is an important factor in facilitating help-seeking behaviour. Studies worldwide have shown that if individuals are able to properly recognise mental disorders, and are aware of likely causes and risk factors as well as avenues of help, there is a higher chance that they will seek appropriate help for themselves or encourage others to do so. Increased knowledge will also help to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness and those living with mental health conditions.
3. The first study, conducted in 2014, showed that recognition of five common mental health conditions¹ ranged between 12% to 66%, with schizophrenia being the most poorly recognised. It identified socio-demographic factors associated with mental health literacy and subgroups within the population that possessed poorer mental health literacy. It also shed light on the extent of stigma related to the five mental disorders and why a large proportion of individuals who require mental healthcare do not receive treatment.
4. “The findings from the first Mind Matters study eight years ago provided us with baseline information on our population’s mental health literacy. Since then, various mental health awareness campaigns and anti-stigma initiatives have been introduced to improve the general public’s understanding of common mental disorders and ability to recognise them. We think it’s time to do a follow-up study to gather data on the impact of the efforts as well as assess if mental health literacy among the general public has changed for the better,” said Prof Chong Siow Ann, Senior Consultant, Research Division, IMH and the Principal Investigator of the study.
5. He added, “Also pertinent this time is examining the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic – with all its ramifications and the strenuous efforts to shore up the general state of mental well-being – on the attitudes of the population towards mental health. These findings will be of significance for future public health policies.”

¹ Dementia, alcohol abuse, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, schizophrenia

6. IMH researchers have expanded the scope of the second study to include new aspects related to mental health. One of these aspects is the measure of social inclusivity, which will focus on how inclusive our society is in areas such as work, education and housing/accommodation, recreation and community involvement. The study will also provide insights on how recent policies and initiatives have helped to promote social inclusiveness in Singapore.
7. “Social inclusion refers to an individual’s sense of belonging and acceptance within their social circles as well as the larger community. It also looks at the freedom to participate in activities, like getting a job or buying a flat, because the opportunities are accessible to the individual. We know that social inclusion plays a big part in recovery from mental illness, but people with mental health issues often face barriers such as stigma, limited social and financial resources that affect or impede their participation in society. If they are to get better and reclaim their lives, they need community support to be able to access opportunities to pursue their goals and be contributing members of society. This study will allow us to get a sense of how Singapore residents feel about their social inclusion, and whether it is different for people living with mental health issues,” says Dr Mythily Subramaniam, Assistant Chairman, Medical Board (Research), IMH.
8. Collection of data for the study will begin in August 2022 and will continue through to August 2023. It will involve over 4,000 Singapore residents and permanent residents aged between 18 and 65 years, who are randomly selected from a national database. Trained interviewers will conduct face-to-face interviews with participants. This includes using vignettes (short story of a hypothetical person with a mental illness) to assess recognition of the illness, beliefs regarding its causes and treatment outcomes, and participants’ attitudes towards the character.
9. The second nationwide Mind Matters: A Study of Mental Health Literacy is funded by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Tote Board. The research team involved in this study is led by Prof Chong Siow Ann and Dr Mythily Subramaniam from the IMH Research Division. The team also includes experts from University of Leipzig, MOH Office for Healthcare Transformation and Silver Ribbon (Singapore).

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About the Institute of Mental Health (IMH)

The Institute of Mental Health (IMH), a member of the National Healthcare Group, is the only tertiary psychiatric care institution in Singapore. Located on the sprawling 23-hectare campus of Buangkok Green Medical Park in the north-eastern part of Singapore, IMH offers a multidisciplinary and comprehensive range of psychiatric, rehabilitative and therapy services in hospital-based and community-based settings. The 2,000-bedded hospital aims to meet the needs of three groups of patients – children and adolescents (aged below 19 years), adults and the elderly. Besides providing clinical services, IMH dedicates resources to carry out mental health promotion and raise mental health literacy. IMH also leads in mental health research and training the next generation of mental health professionals in Singapore. For more information, please visit www.imh.com.sg or www.facebook.com/imh.singapore.

Annex A

Researchers involved in the second National Mental Health Literacy Study

Principal Investigator:

- Prof Chong Siow Ann, Institute of Mental Health

Co-Investigators:

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- Dr Edimansyah Abdin, Institute of Mental Health
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