



## **25 PARTNERS VOICE OUT SUPPORT ON WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY** **Free concert to raise awareness and combat stigma against mental health issues**

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***For immediate release***

Persons with mental illness must often contend with negative public perceptions or misconceptions about their conditions. But what happens when these public perceptions are internalised?

For the first time, researchers from the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) have found that self-imposed stigma may influence the impact of perceived stigma, quality of life, self-esteem and functioning in persons with mental illness. These were the findings of an 18-month study involving 280 psychiatric outpatients from IMH who were suffering from depression, schizophrenia, anxiety or obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)<sup>1</sup>.

Self-stigma occurs when people with mental illness accept, internalise and apply the negative beliefs others may have towards them. In addition to symptoms associated with their mental health condition, affected individuals may experience feelings of shame, rejection or hopelessness, which can in turn negatively impact their quality of life, general functioning or self-esteem.

Studies have also shown a correlation between self-stigma and poor outcomes among people with mental illness, including reduced quality of life or life satisfaction, difficulties obtaining employment and/or housing, as well as treatment adherence. As many as 43.6 per cent<sup>2</sup> of persons with mental illness in Singapore may experience moderate- to high- levels of self-stigma.

“Self-stigma is directly influenced by negative public beliefs and polarising viewpoints. It often leads to individuals delaying seeking help, with some avoiding treatment completely to reduce any association with mental illness,” said Associate Professor Mythily Subramaniam, Director of the Research Division at IMH, and co-author of the papers. “This further underlines the need for us to dispel public misconceptions about mental illness, and to impart coping skills to people with mental illness.”

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<sup>1</sup> The results were published in the scientific journal, *BMJ Open*, in August this year.

<sup>2</sup> Picco L, Pang S, Lau YW, et al. Internalized stigma among psychiatric outpatients: Associations with quality of life, functioning, hope and self-esteem. *Psychiatry Res* 2016;246:500–6.

## **Voicing Out against Stigma**

To raise awareness and reduce stigma about mental health issues in Singapore, \*25 agencies and community partners from the healthcare and social services sectors have come together to organise “*Voice Out*” – a free outdoor concert at the Singapore Botanic Gardens on 7 October 2017. Over 2,500 people are expected to attend.

Held in conjunction with the annual World Mental Health Day, the concert features a line-up of local artistes, many of whom are mental health advocates, as well as a special guest appearance by international Mandopop-star, Stefanie Sun.

Pre-concert fringe activities will include eight *Human Library* stations, manned by mental health advocates and peer support specialists who will share about their personal experiences with mental illness. Participants can also try their hand at therapeutic art activities and join in a mass mindfulness session.

To give a voice to persons with mental health issues, an original song entitled “*Voice Out*” (Annex) was composed especially for the event. Co-written by General Practitioner and mental health advocate, Dr Joel Foo, the song encourages individuals to ask after and show their concern for those with mental health conditions. The music video is performed by people from all walks of life, including a peer in recovery, a caregiver and nurse, symbolising members of the community coming together to show their acceptance and support for persons with mental health issues.

Dr Jason Cheah, Agency for Integrated Care (AIC)’s Chief Executive Officer said, “We are very encouraged that even more partners have come on board this year to commemorate World Mental Health Day, raise awareness of mental health and dispel misconceptions about it. AIC is committed to working with our partners to build up services and resources available to support people with mental health conditions. By working with the entire community, we hope to create an environment that supports people with mental health conditions to live well.”

A/Prof Chua Hong Choon, Chief Executive Officer of the Institute of Mental Health said, “Persons living with mental illness face challenges such as social isolation and discrimination as they are often stereotyped as being incompetent, unpredictable and even dangerous. When such discriminations are internalised, these persons start to develop self-stigma which hinder them from reaching out for help. We need to break this cycle by coming forward to talk about mental illness. That is what we hope to achieve through the *Voice Out* concert. Featuring mental health advocates, caregivers and volunteers, we want to send a strong message to be bold to speak up for yourself and others. Speaking about mental health promotes understanding. And when the community understands mental health issues better, it becomes the support network that will end isolation and promote social inclusion.”

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**For more information, please contact:**

Tania Tan  
Assistant Director  
Group Corporate Communications  
National Healthcare Group  
Tel: 6496 6267  
Email: [tania\\_ll\\_tan@nhg.com.sg](mailto:tania_ll_tan@nhg.com.sg)

Benetta Lim  
Executive  
Group Corporate Communications  
National Healthcare Group  
Tel: 6496 6268  
Email: [benetta\\_sm\\_lim@nhg.com.sg](mailto:benetta_sm_lim@nhg.com.sg)

Sum Foong Yee  
Assistant Manager  
Corporate Communications  
Institute of Mental Health  
Tel: 6389 2986  
HP: 8218 2172  
Email: [foong\\_yee\\_sum@imh.com.sg](mailto:foong_yee_sum@imh.com.sg)

Yap Yeong Min  
Executive  
Corporate & Marketing Communications  
Agency for Integrated Care  
Tel: 6632 1268  
Email: [Yeong.min.yap@aic.sg](mailto:Yeong.min.yap@aic.sg)

\* Voice out is co-organised by:

Agency for Integrated Care  
Institute of Mental Health  
National Council of Social Service  
Health Promotion Board  
MINDSET Care Limited  
Alzheimer's Disease Association  
Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centre Community Services  
Brahm Centre  
Campus PSY  
Caregivers Alliance Limited  
Changi General Hospital  
Clarity Singapore  
Club HEAL  
Filos Community Services  
National Healthcare Group  
National University Hospital  
Ng Teng Fong General Hospital  
O'Joy Care Services  
Project We Forgot  
Samaritans of Singapore  
Silver Ribbon (Singapore)  
Singapore Anglican Community Services  
Singapore Association for Mental Health  
St Luke's Hospital  
TOUCH Community Services

## **ANNEX – Voice Out Lyrics**

Have you been feeling down and out lately?  
Call a Friend today  
Have you been sad and a little melancholy?  
Cry it out, it's okay

When you've tried and cried and you're hurting inside  
And you feel life's falling apart,  
Look around you, there's always someone to confide in  
Someone with whom to pour out your heart to

Chorus:

\*Voice out! Voice out your troubles  
Voice out! Leave your worries behind  
Voice out! Voice out your feelings  
Voice out voice out voice out voice out  
Tell me what is on your mind.\*

Have you been feeling happy, be grateful  
Share your joy today.  
When a friend gets better, be thankful  
Come, let's celebrate!

Lend a helping hand and a listening ear  
There is so much we can do  
With our support, you'll have nothing to fear  
A healthy mind begins with you!

\*Repeat Chorus\*