

# INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH



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Mental health is an integral component of every individual's overall state of health and well-being. It affects people of all ages and from all walks of life, and is thus a critical aspect of strengthening NHG's *River of Life* framework. The Institute of Mental Health (IMH) supports individuals across various dimensions of mental health. It goes beyond treating the ill to keeping the well mentally healthy, and reducing the stigma on mental illness.

## STEPPING UP DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### ENSURING PATIENT SAFETY

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, IMH repurposed three wards in the hospital to better detect and prevent COVID-19 infection among patients. A Step-down Medical Ward was created for patients who needed to be transferred to the general wards after they were treated for acute medical conditions. Patients were cared for and observed in this ward for up to 72 hours to ensure they were COVID-19-free before they returned to their original wards.

In addition, an Enhanced Screening Ward was set up for patients at medium risk for COVID-19 infection – those who were admitted from nursing homes, other public hospitals, or serving Stay-Home Notice (SHN). Patients who were COVID-19 positive and needed mental healthcare were placed in the Ward Isolation Facility, an environment optimised for the care of patients with mild symptoms. With this system in place, IMH was better equipped to ensure the safety of patients during the on-going pandemic.



Clockwise from below: The Sayang Wellness Centre (SWC) Clinic at IMH; IMH Ward 82A and Ward 23A staff refresher training.



### FOR THOSE FACING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS, HERE ARE SOME HELPLINES:

- National Care Hotline: 1800-202-6868
- Samaritans of Singapore: 1800-221-4444/1-767
- Silver Ribbon Singapore: 6386-1928
- IMH's Mental Health Helpline: 6389-2222
- Singapore Association for Mental Health: 1800-283-7019
- Community Health Assessment Team: 6493-6500/1



### PROVIDING PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

On 10 April 2020, the National CARE Hotline was launched to offer psychological first aid to people who felt stressed and anxious about the COVID-19 pandemic. Associate Professor Lee Cheng, Clinical Director, Population Health, IMH, and Associate Professor Clare Yeo, Senior Principal Clinical Psychologist, IMH, were activated as Chief, CARE, and Head of CARE, Ministry of Health (MOH), respectively.

105 staff volunteers comprising clinical psychologists, medical social workers, case managers, counsellors, occupational therapists, and a nurse clinician, took on eight-hour shifts as Duty CARE Officers (DCOs).

The hotline managed some 30,000 calls five months after it was introduced. Common issues faced by the callers included concerns about isolation, finances, family conflict, and worries about their health and future. Based on the issues the callers faced, DCOs linked them up with social service agencies and specialised services to ensure they received appropriate help.

In the second half of 2020, MOH partnered IMH to form the 'COVID-19 Mental Wellness Taskforce' to address the mental health impact of COVID-19 on the Singapore population. The Taskforce brought together key ministries and agencies involved in mental health to ensure a coordinated national response to the mental health needs of Singapore. In mid-2021, the Taskforce evolved into an inter-agency platform to oversee mental health and well-being efforts beyond the pandemic.



### DEVELOPING MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES ONLINE

IMH was part of a multidisciplinary team that launched *mindline.sg* in June 2020. The team included clinicians, as well as social and data scientists from the MOH Office for Healthcare Transformation (MOHT), the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), and the National Council of Social Service (NCSS). An online tool developed in response to the social, economic, and psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, *mindline.sg* facilitated the health and emotional wellness of Singaporeans by providing users convenient access to a wide variety of help and support resources. A key feature of *mindline.sg* is a clinically-validated self-assessment tool designed by Dr Jimmy Lee, Senior Consultant, IMH. Users who engaged the tool were directed to local help resources that match their needs. The platform was enhanced in October 2020 by collaborating with Wysa, an AI-powered mental health app that combines an "emotionally intelligent" chat platform and digital self-help techniques.

IMH also organised various webinars in FY2020 to assist various groups of people to better manage their own mental health, or help others, during these challenging times. IMH trained frontline workers in "Psychological First Aid", equipping them with basic knowledge and skills to help distressed migrant workers. Organisations such as Jamiyah Singapore and Republic Polytechnic worked with IMH to organise talks for different groups of people affected by the pandemic.



### LEVERAGING DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

In June 2020, IMH Mood Disorders Unit organised a webinar, *Coping with Mood Disorders during the Pandemic*, which was attended by 160 members of the public. The forum addressed how individuals living with mood disorders, as well as their caregivers, could overcome challenges and build resilience during such unprecedented times.

From mid-September to end-October 2020, IMH together with the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) and close to 30 agencies came together to organise virtual webinars, workshops, and activities in conjunction with World Mental Health Day 2020. Themed *Emerging Mentally Stronger Together – Strategies for a New Normal*, the events aimed to help participants overcome the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and adapt to a new normal. In addition, IMH held the Mental Health Film Festival and a run to raise awareness on youth mental health.

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### BATTLING AT THE FRONTLINES

IMH supported the nation's fight against COVID-19 on the frontlines by deploying 48 Registered Nurses and 25 Medical Officers to the various medical posts at migrant worker dormitories, Community Isolation Facilities (CIFs), and Community Care Facilities (CCFs). The nurses helped with registration, triaging, dispensing medication, and performing swab procedures.

From April to September 2020, IMH Nursing Education and nurses from the Infection Control Department organised hospital-wide training for clinical staff to ensure the hospital was operationally ready to conduct COVID-19 swab tests. 629 nurses were trained and certified competent to perform the procedure.

### CARING FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In June 2020, IMH Child Guidance Clinic's Neurobehavioural Clinic (Autism Services), with support from MOH and in collaboration with the National University Hospital (NUH) and KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH), produced a Special Care Kit for individuals with special needs who have to go through COVID-19 procedures.

The care kit included visual materials and an animated video, designed to help them cope better with the procedures of testing, diagnosis, and treatment. Caregivers and healthcare workers also used these materials to better communicate with, and manage these individuals. These materials were accessible through the websites of IMH, KKH, and NUH.

In June 2020, IMH's Department of Developmental Psychiatry shared its expertise in a webinar for caregivers of children with special needs, focusing on managing anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic. The webinar was part of a four-session digital series by the Lien Foundation in partnership with the Child Development Unit at NUH, SG Enable, and Superhero Me, a non-profit inclusive arts organisation.



### MENTAL HEALTH TIPS

Recognising that many staff were juggling family responsibilities beyond working hours, the IMH Psychology Department produced 17 e-posters that contained mental health tips which were sent out to staff on a weekly basis between March and July 2020. Topics covered included the importance of building resilience and adapting to change, and managing anxiety.

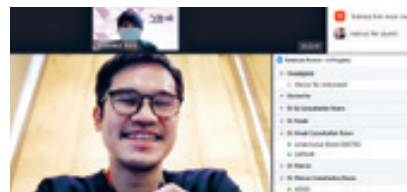
## APPRECIATING OUR STAFF AND PARTNERS

### SAYANG AWARDS 2020

On 24 December 2020, the Sayang Awards 2020 (Special Edition) was held in conjunction with a virtual Christmas celebration. The awards honoured 50 staff who made significant contributions during the pandemic and exemplified NHG's core values of People-Centredness, Integrity, Compassion and Stewardship. A Special Sayang Award was presented to Professor Chua Hong Choon, then-outgoing CEO of IMH (now, CEO of KTPH & Yishun Health), in recognition of his tremendous contributions to mental health in Singapore during his 27-year career with the hospital.



Prof Chua Hong Choon, Deputy Group CEO (Strategy & Transformation), NHG, and CEO, KTPH & Yishun Health, and A/Prof Daniel Fung, CEO, IMH, with staff at the Sayang Awards 2020.



## TRANSFORMING CARE

### EXPANDING ACCESS TO PSYCHIATRY CARE THROUGH TELE-TREATMENT

IMH adopted the use of tele-treatment to reduce infection risks for patients and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. Building from the experience of providing tele-treatment services to nursing homes since 2016, IMH started a trial of the service for outpatients in March 2020 and it went "live" from August 2020. Between April 2020 and January 2021, 1,085 patients benefitted from the service.

IMH also stepped up teleconsultations to nursing homes during the pandemic – from 267 sessions in January 2020 to 473 in January 2021. The number of nursing homes that subscribed to the service increased from 24 in January 2020 to 36 in January 2021.



"It has been more than a year since the COVID-19 pandemic started and I am proud of our colleagues for their selfless service in the face of such a long-drawn adversity. Our goals in the last year are consistent with our aspirations for beyond 2020; recovery, hope, and independence for patients, wellness, resilience, and happiness for the people of Singapore and meaningful, rewarding, and joyful work for staff and partners."

Associate Professor Daniel Fung CEO, Institute of Mental Health

## RESEARCH & EDUCATION

### UPDATING HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS ON MOOD DISORDERS AND OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

In December 2020, the Mood Disorders Unit at IMH hosted the second edition of the annual Mood Disorder Updates for Professionals via a webinar. The event provided updates on interventions for depression and bipolar disorder. Topics covered also included the management of perinatal mental health, neurostimulation, virtual cognitive behavioural therapy groups, and an introduction to art therapy.

Separately, the annual workshop on obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) for mental health professionals with an interest in working with families or individuals with OCD was held in January 2021, with a second session organised in February 2021. Topics covered included pharmacological and psychological treatment options such as Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) therapy, as well as practical ways of applying the ERP principles to cases.

### CODE BLUE GAMIFICATION PROJECT

IMH nursing collaborated with Temasek Polytechnic via the Health Innovation Challenge to use gamification for code blue training of nurses. The first prototype of the application, released in May 2018, showed good results, with nurses reporting increased confidence and retention of learned content.

In 2020, the team was awarded the ALIVE Serious Game Grant of \$15,000 to improve the game application together with the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine. With technical support from Nanyang Polytechnic, the team redesigned the game in January 2021. The game was rolled out to all nurses during the Emergency Resuscitation training course in May 2021.

### IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH OF CAREGIVERS

The *Well-being of the Singapore Elderly* (WISE) study conducted in 2013, found a 10 per cent prevalence of dementia among those aged 60 years and above, and that caregivers of older adults with dementia were more likely to experience higher caregiver's burden. In this regard, knowledge of dementia was shown to be a protective factor against caregiver's distress. From January 2017 to December 2018, Dr Yuan Qi, Research Fellow at IMH Research Division, led a study to investigate the extent of dementia knowledge among caregivers in Singapore using the Dementia Knowledge Assessment Scale (DKAS). This enabled the team to identify knowledge gaps about dementia among caregivers that needed to be addressed. The other aim of the study was to identify how certain caregivers' characteristics affected their knowledge about dementia.

282 primary caregivers between the ages of 24 and 85 were recruited from IMH, its satellite clinics, and Changi General Hospital. Findings from the study suggested a need for knowledge of dementia to be improved among caregivers. Additionally, being a male caregiver and having a lower education were associated with poorer scores. Notably, duration of caregiving did not significantly predict better scores on any factors.

These findings highlighted the importance of introducing more educational interventions on dementia tailored for caregivers, especially male caregivers and those with lower education. The findings also indicated that experienced caregivers may benefit from such interventions. The study was published in the *Journal of Mental Health and Aging* in March 2020.



### INVESTIGATING THE CAUSES OF STIGMA TOWARDS MENTAL ILLNESS IN SINGAPORE

Researchers from IMH Research Division conducted a study to understand the causes and reasons of stigma towards mental illness in Singapore, and investigated the cultural influences of stigma from the public's perspective.

Nine focus group discussions were conducted between February and September 2018 with 63 Singaporean participants from the public. The study team identified 11 themes for the causes and reasons of stigma and conceptualised them into a sociological model to show how stigma was influenced by culture and environment. The generic causes of stigma such as the 'fear towards a person with mental illness (PMI)' and the 'intergroup bias' were universal and similar to what was reported in studies conducted overseas. The cultural influences of stigma identified in this study included the 'Chinese culture of 'face' and 'Asian's conservative values'. The themes that were more unique to Singapore's context were the 'elitist mindset among Singaporeans' and the 'perceived inability to handle interactions with PMI'. These findings would be helpful in shaping the design of future anti-stigma interventions in Singapore. The study was published in the *BMC Psychiatry Journal* in August 2020.



The socioecological explanatory model for stigma.

## ADVANCING MENTAL HEALTH

### ENGAGEMENT, REHABILITATION, AND PLACEMENT (ERP) FOR PATIENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

In February 2020, IMH piloted a rehabilitation programme for IMH long-stay adult patients with intellectual disability (ID) to improve their functional, cognition, and emotional status. The multidisciplinary team in the ward introduced a range of clinical and recreational interventions including domestic and basic conversational skills. The patients were then put on a Ward Work Rehabilitation Programme (WWRP) to receive simple work training, a stepping stone for employment in the future. A year into the programme, 46 per cent of the 11 clients showed improvement in rehabilitation potential. A patient who had stayed in IMH for seven years showed significant improvement and was discharged home. This pilot programme will be further improved and refined as more patients get enrolled, with plans for it to become a mainstream initiative at IMH.

### SUPPORTING NURSING HOMES

In March 2019, IMH started a pilot Virtual Ward Programme with Econ Nursing Home, aimed at creating a support system for nursing home partners to better manage residents with mental health conditions. Econ Nursing Home identified patients with frequent relapses to the Virtual Ward Team. The team would then conduct an on-site review to help the nursing home staff gain competency to manage the patients. For patients who had to be admitted to IMH, the Virtual Ward Team continued to provide support virtually. Approximately 100 patients were enrolled in the programme from March 2019 to March 2021, with the addition of Sunlove Nursing Home. Since the programme started, there was a significant reduction of more than 50 per cent in the readmission rate of patients from the two nursing homes. Those who were admitted to IMH had a shorter length of stay of more than 50 per cent. The Virtual Ward Programme was awarded the Health Services Development Programme Funding, which will be used in FY2021 to expand this initiative to other nursing home partners.

IMH organised IACAPAP 2020.



### BOLSTERING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR THE YOUNG

IMH organised the 24<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions (IACAPAP) 2020, which was held virtually in December 2020. The opening ceremony was graced by Guest-of-Honour President Halimah Yacob. The biennial event attracted 1,572 child and adolescent psychiatrists and Allied Health Professionals, from 85 countries. Associate Professor Daniel Fung, President of the IACAPAP and CEO of IMH, shared insights on developing children-centric mental health policies.

### EDUCATING PARTNERS AND THE COMMUNITY ON OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

In December 2020, the team from the Assessment Shared Care Teams (ASCAT) conducted a session on OCD for 40 community partners. It focused on symptoms of OCD and effective methods to manage and detect the condition. IMH also gave a virtual talk on "Scrupulosity: When religious or moral beliefs become OCD" at the Catholic Youth Mental Health Festival (also known as BRAVE conference). Insights into the differences between scrupulosity (a subtype of OCD) and normal healthy spiritual practices were presented, accompanied by treatment interventions.



### BETTER MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH ART

In March 2019, the IMH Mood Disorders Unit started the Art Therapy programme with its team of art psychotherapists to facilitate recovery for patients with mood disorders. Art therapy emphasises non-verbal expression, providing less threatening ways for patients to contemplate their experiences and feelings. It also helps patients to explore new perspectives and build resilience. The art pieces gave the team insights into the patients' state of mind, allowing for more appropriate interventions in their journey to recovery. 400 patients took part in the Art Therapy programme between March 2019 and March 2021.

### 50 YEARS OF CHILD PSYCHIATRY

The Child Guidance Clinic (CGC) commemorated its 50<sup>th</sup> year with the publication of a graphic book which captured its 50-year journey. Titled *The Stress Wars: How Many Psychiatrists Does It Take To Raise A Child?*, the book was written by Associate Professor Daniel Fung, CEO, IMH, and Associate Professor Ong Say How, Chief, Department of Developmental Psychiatry, and illustrated by design students from Nanyang Polytechnic.

The history of child psychiatry in Singapore was also featured in the "Singapore Policy History Project" in collaboration with the National Archives of Singapore. It provided a glimpse into the early years of child mental health services in Singapore and the policies that shaped the CGC's development through a curated collection of newspaper clippings, photographs, and government records.

