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The Psy Issue



HealThy Mind, HealThy Life

By Denise Yuen and Mellissa Ang

The 43rd SMA National Medical Convention, HealThy Mind HealThy Life, was held on 8 September 2012 at Sheraton Towers Singapore. Organised in collaboration with the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG), a division of the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), this year's convention focused on topics related to mental health.

The convention kicked off in the morning with an opening address by Convention Committee Co-Chairperson, Dr Ang Peng Chye, a consultant psychiatrist in private practice. Speaking to a crowded floor of more than 350 attendees, he emphasised the relevance of the convention's theme of "HealThy Mind, HealThy Life" for Singaporeans of all ages today.

In his opening address, SMA 1st Vice President Dr Chong Yeh Woei highlighted the increasing concerns about mental health in Singapore, due to the numerous stressors in our society today for people across all ages. Dr Chong urged the audience to gain as much knowledge as they can from the different topics discussed during the convention.

The first keynote speaker, Mr Gerard Ee, Public Guardian Board Member, delivered his keynote lecture titled "The Mental Capacity Act". He noted that the convention's emphasis on mental health filled in nicely with OPG's work, and that "the greying of our population brings about its own set of issues, which includes greater demand for healthcare services, a higher old-age dependency ratio and the increasing incidence of age-related illness, such as dementia". Therefore, in recent years, various legislative changes have also been made to meet these challenges, including the implementation of the Mental Capacity Act, which lays out the perimeters within which decisions are to be made in the best interest of those who lack mental capacity, and also introduces a new legal

instrument, the Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA). He explained the concept of the LPA and also encouraged the audience to consider taking it up as part of pre-planning.

This was immediately followed by the next keynote speaker, A/Prof Chua Hong Choon, Chief Executive Officer, Institute of Mental Health (IMH), who gave an engaging keynote lecture titled "Good Mental Health – We All Play a Part!" He noted that from 2007 to this year, the Government has invested a lot of resources into increasing the capacity and capability of mental healthcare in Singapore, and shared some successes they have had. For example, various community mental health programmes targeting young people, adults and the elderly have been set up. There is a programme called Response, Early Intervention, and Assessment in Community Mental Health (REACH) for young people. A/Prof Chua explained, "REACH is a multidisciplinary team. We have doctors, nurses, psychologists, and even social workers and counsellors. They form small teams and they work with all the schools in Singapore." He revealed that in the 2011 financial year, the REACH programme has helped 739 kids in schools throughout Singapore, and 250 of them have had more formal treatment.

A/Prof Chua also shared the determinants of good mental health and positive well-being in Singapore. The first two are: general coping and emotional support. There is also spirituality, which is different from being just religious, but rather, understanding the meaning of one's existence. The next is learning a skill, to make oneself feel useful and be helpful to other people with one's skill. The fifth is personal growth and autonomy, learning more about life and how one can help oneself and others. The last is happiness, learning to enjoy one's emotions, and not to be afraid of them. He concluded his lecture by exhorting the audience to help themselves and also others: "As health professionals are reaching out to members of the public and to the patients to provide them with more support, encouragement and care, my request to you is to reach out to yourself and each other; to do things that would improve your mental well-being. And most importantly, to reach out and help those who suffer from mental illness. Remember that the earlier we help them to access care and treatment, the better their chances for recovery."

The full-day Public Symposium, attended by members of the general public, then commenced. The Lunch and Medical Symposia, organised for doctors and medical students, were held in the afternoon.





Mr Gerard Ee

A/Prof Chua Hong Choon

Public Symposium

The format of this year's Public Symposium was markedly different from the previous year's. Last year's Public Symposium lasted half a day, and featured concurrent English and Mandarin sessions. This year, the Public Symposium consisted of three parts, each comprising four separate breakout sessions, and the entire programme lasted a whole day. Participants chose to attend one of the four breakout sessions for each of the three parts. The talks were held in both English and Mandarin.

In Part 1 of the Public Symposium, participants learnt more about mental health issues that commonly afflict those in different age groups (children/youth, adults and the elderly) from psychiatrists in different subspecialties and other experts. Meanwhile, Parts 2 and 3 of the Public Symposium featured speakers appointed by OPG, and who discussed topics related to the Mental Capacity Act.

Public Symposium Part 1 Children/Youth

Does Your Child Need to See a Psychiatrist?

- A/Prof Daniel Fung, Chairman, Medical Board and Senior Consultant, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, IMH

A/Prof Fung advised that while an anxious child needs an assessment that addresses medical, family and learning problems, she may not always need a psychiatrist. He suggested various methods to cope with a child's anxiety disorder, including cognitive behavioural therapy, in settings such as a school-based intervention. In addition, A/Prof Fung showed statistics that the disease burden in Singapore for autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and anxiety and depression are prevalent in children aged zero to 14 years old.

Understanding Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Its Treatment, and How Parents Can Help

- Dr Ng Koon Hock, Consultant Psychiatrist, The Psychotherapy Clinic for Adults and Children, Camden Medical Centre

Dr Ng explained that while obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is a relatively common condition, it remains hidden as the child is often embarrassed by her own behaviour. He revealed that OCD could manifest in different environments so it is crucial for parents to attempt

certain changes to improve their child's OCD. As OCD is a clinical diagnosis, Dr Ng emphasised that parents have to be prepared that their child may show signs of resentment towards the treatments administered.

Tackling Eating Disorders in Children and Youth

- Dr Lee Ee Lian, Senior Consultant, Department of Psychiatry, Singapore General Hospital (SGH)

Dr Lee explained various eating disorders, like anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge-eating disorder. She noted that eating disorders could stunt young people's physical growth and sexual development, and damage their brains, bones and fertility. To prevent eating disorders, she suggested that parents set good examples and build up their children's self-esteem by encouraging non-physical qualities and emphasising good health, not good looks.

Oh Dear! Is My Child Addicted?

- Dr Thomas Lee, Consultant Psychiatrist, The Resilienz Mind Psychological Medicine and Counselling Centre, Novena Specialist Center

According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine, an addiction is considered a "chronic brain disorder". Dr Lee highlighted that some behaviours of concern included changes in the child's school performance, and mood and behaviour changes. Dr Lee urged parents to adopt various methods to prevent their children from developing addictions, such as being actively involved in their children's lives and recognising warning signs.

Adults

Stress at the Workplace – Whose Problem Is It Anyway?

- Ms Sng Yan Ling, Deputy Director, Mental Health Education, Adult Health Division, Health Promotion Board

Ms Sng noted that not all stress is necessarily bad, as work with managed stress can be beneficial for health and well-being. She pointed out some tell-tale signs that one is under stress: physical (eg, high blood pressure), behavioural (eg, emotional eating), and cognitive (eg, loss of sense of humour). Workplace stress is caused by various aspects both in the organisation (eg, environment and culture) and the individual (eg, personality and coping). She suggested useful tips to prevent and manage stress, like maintaining a healthy lifestyle and practising relaxation techniques.



Members of the public arriving for the convention



Ms Sng Yan Ling



L to R: Dr Mark Chan, Dr Ng Li-Ling and Dr Ang Peng Chye

Understanding Addictions

- A/Prof Munidasa Winslow, Executive Director, Promises Pte Ltd, Novena Medical Center

In behavioural addictions (eg, gambling), the addicts attach value to behaviours usually associated with dysfunction, and their behaviours are usually hidden. In substance addictions, substances often abused include narcotics, depressants and stimulants. A/Prof Winslow noted that no single treatment works for all addicts. Medications, individual or group counselling, and behavioural strategies are essential for good treatment outcomes.

Psychosis – The Worst of the Worse

- Dr Lim Yun Chin, Consultant Psychiatrist, Raffles Counselling Centre, Raffles Hospital

Dr Lim focused on schizophrenia and noted that current treatment was inadequate, as it is a chronic course with residual symptoms. Stigma and prejudice often lead to delayed treatment, poor compliance, poor access to care and undertreatment. Dr Lim noted that the risk factors for schizophrenia include family history, and maternal infection during pregnancy. Universal preventive efforts include adequate prenatal care for all women to reduce prenatal and obstetric risk factors.

Handling Depression

- Dr Tian Cheong Sing, Consultant Psychiatrist, The Psychotherapy Clinic for Adults and Children, Camden Medical Centre

Dr Tian explained the factors causing depression, including early adverse childhood environments and personality vulnerabilities. He named the different types of depression, and explained the signs and symptoms of each. Dr Tian also cited statistics indicating the prevalence, persistence

and recurrence of depression in patients. Methods for treating depression include medications and psychological interventions.

The Elderly

Dementia in the Elderly

- Dr Mark Chan, Consultant, Department of Geriatric Medicine, Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH)

After starting his presentation with the factors that define dementia, Dr Chan pointed out that up to 6% of the population above 65 years old in Singapore have dementia, with total numbers rising to 53,000 by 2020. He clarified that not all memory losses are due to dementia. He then described the medical assessment required for memory loss, such as doctors' assessments and interviews for functional and social assessment.

Depression in the Elderly

- Dr Ng Li-Ling, Senior Consultant, Department of Psychological Medicine, Changi General Hospital

Due to the increasing prevalence of depression in the elderly, Dr Ng foresaw challenges that could arise for the local healthcare sector as well as for patients and their family. Apart from promoting the early detection of depression in the elderly, she also touched on the causes of depression, which are primarily aetiological factors. She proposed several methods to manage depression, like the biopsychosocial approach and the Community Psychogeriatric Programme.

Psychotherapy in Old Age

- Dr Ang Peng Chye, Consultant Psychiatrist, The Psychotherapy Clinic for Adults and Children, Camden Medical Centre

Dr Ang noted that tens of billions are spent on medical



Dr Sim Kang (left) and Dr Yeo Seem Huat



Dr Seng Kok Han



A participant asking a question



A/Prof Munidasa Winslow



L to R: Dr Lee Ee Lian, Dr Chong Yeh Woei and Dr Thomas Lee



Mr Daniel Koh

procedures each year, for treatments like facelifts, due to materialism and the desire to look young. He asked the audience, "What happens when we are confronted with a reality that does not conform with our image of how things are, or how things should be or could be?" He explained that as confusion arises in our minds, we lose our natural spaciousness, but acknowledging impermanence is the key to life itself.

Mental Capacity Act – Planning Ahead

- Mr Daniel Koh, The Public Guardian, OPG, MSF

Mr Koh explained the LPA and the benefits of making one. He also highlighted the differences between the Mental Disorders and Treatment Act and the Mental Capacity Act, where the latter recognises fluctuating mental capacity and is decision specific, and so on.

Mandarin (Adults and the Elderly)

Understanding Depression in Adults: From Clinical Features, Causes to Cures

- Dr Sim Kang, Senior Consultant and Deputy Chief, Department of General Psychiatry, IMH

Dr Sim discussed some of the pertinent aspects of depression in adults, including clinical features, possible causes and management options. He hoped that a better understanding of depression will foster better detection of its onset and facilitate earlier treatment and recovery.

Discussing Psychosis – Schizophrenia

- Dr Yeo Seem Huat, Consultant Psychiatrist, Yeo Seem Huat Psychiatric Clinic, Paragon Medical Centre

Dr Yeo discussed the causes of schizophrenia, its symptoms, and methods of treatment. He felt that it would become a growing problem due to the ageing population,

and felt that early discovery helps in early treatment and prompt recovery.

Understanding Dementia in the Elderly

- Dr Seng Kok Han, Consultant and Deputy Chief, Department of Geriatric Psychiatry, IMH

Dr Seng noted that dementia is not a normal part of ageing. He discussed the risk factors, signs and symptoms of the various stages of dementia, investigations and treatment approaches. He also shared ways to prevent dementia, like eating certain foods. He also provided advice on the care of the demented patient and also the caregiver, to ensure a good quality of life for both.

Mental Capacity Act – Planning Ahead

- Mr Khoo Aik Yeow, Legal Consultant, ST Chew & Partners

Mr Khoo explained the LPA and the benefits of making one. He also explained the consequences if someone who has not made an LPA loses mental capacity.

Public Symposium Part 2

Role of the Court – Protecting a Person without Mental Capacity

- District Judge (DJ) Jocelyn Ong, Group Manager of Family Mediations, CAPS and Family Court, The Subordinate Courts of Singapore

The Mental Capacity Act enables people to plan ahead and gives them the power to make choices for their future before they lose their mental capacity. It addresses the need to make decisions for persons who are 21 years or older when they lack mental capacity to make those decisions for themselves. DJ Ong covered general aspects of this Act, the role of the court in protecting the interests of persons who lack mental capacity, and the approach taken by the court.



Ms Loh Wai Mooi



Mr Khoo Aik Yeow



Singapore Association for Mental Health booth



A/Prof Chong Siow Ann

Doctors and medical students attending the Lunch and Medical Symposiums

Living with Dementia

- Ms Linda Chua, Management Committee Member, Alzheimer's Disease Association

Ms Chua started by pointing out the warning signs of dementia, including memory loss, and difficulties in performing familiar tasks. She also noted the warning signs that those caring for dementia patients are undergoing stress, including depression and exhaustion. As looking after patients with dementia is an exceptionally demanding 24-hour task, it is unsurprising that caregivers experience strains, as high levels of burnout are reported even among healthcare professionals. She underscored the importance of family support, key to the well-being of those with dementia.

Making Decisions for Persons Who Lack Capacity

- Ms Loh Wai Mooi, Partner, Bih Li & Lee

Ms Loh explained that donees under the LPA and deputies under the Mental Capacity Act Order could refer to the LPA, Mental Capacity Act Order, Code of Practice, and Wishes and Care Plans to help them make a decision. She also recommended good practices to adopt when being appointed a donee or deputy, like utilising wishes and care plans, involving people in the donor's life as well as recording decisions and actions taken on behalf of the donor.

Living with Persons Who Lack Mental Capacity – The Legal Aspects (Mandarin)

- Mr Khoo Aik Yeow, Legal Consultant, ST Chew & Partners

Mr Khoo explained the legalities to observe when caring for those who lack mental capacity, including the area of decision making.

Public Symposium Part 3

Financial Planning for a Person without Mental Capacity

- Ms Esther Tan, General Manager, Special Needs Trust Co. (SNTC)

SNTC is the only non-profit trust company in Singapore set up to provide trust services for the benefit of persons with special needs. Ms Tan explained that by setting up a trust with SNTC, caregivers allow SNTC to administer

the finances for their special needs dependants when they are no longer around. She also elaborated on how SNTC operates and the benefits of setting up a trust with SNTC. She also covered how the Central Provident Fund Special Needs Savings Scheme can complement an SNTC trust fund.

Protection of Persons Who Lack Capacity – Role of the Community

- Ms Chee Lee Chin, Principal Social Worker, Director of Social Welfare Office, MSF

Persons who lack capacity are vulnerable and may suffer physical abuse, sexual abuse, and so on. Ms Chee pointed out some risk factors which predispose caregivers to abuse, including increased demands beyond the caregivers' coping ability, a lack of support, and stressors from other personal or family issues. People in the community (like healthcare professionals, neighbours and friends) who come into contact with vulnerable adults and their families, are best placed to detect and report cases of maltreatment. The role of the entire community is therefore to identify abuse, report it, and provide vulnerable adults and their caregivers with adequate support.

How to Make an LPA?

- English: Ms Laura Chua, Assistant Director, OPG, MSF
- Mandarin: Mr Khoo Aik Yeow, Legal Consultant, ST Chew & Partners

Ms Chua and Mr Khoo explained the Mental Capacity Act and LPA. An LPA empowers an individual to make considered choices about his personal welfare and finances in the event he loses mental capacity. They also illustrated the benefits of making an LPA. They also explained how one can make an LPA and highlighted aspects to consider when making an LPA.

Lunch Symposium

More than 100 doctors and medical students attended the Lunch and Medical Symposiums, where they learnt about the latest developments on mental health, and insights on what these findings mean to them and their practice.

Singapore Mental Health Study

- A/Prof Chong Siow Ann, Senior Consultant Psychiatrist and Vice-Chairman, Medical Board (Research), IMH

A/Prof Chong was the principal investigator of the Singapore Mental Health Study, which lasted from April 2008 to March 2011, aimed to obtain accurate national information about the prevalence and correlates of mental, substance, and behavioural disorders in Singapore. He explained, in detail, the methodology used in the study.

The study found that mental illnesses are not uncommon in Singapore, and that there are gender and ethnic differences associated with the prevalence of certain mental disorders. A large treatment gap exists for majority of mental disorders and this needs to be addressed. There is an association between mental illness and chronic medical conditions, and most of the mental illnesses associated with chronic medical disorders are not treated. There is significant association between work disability and loss of productivity. These major findings have implications on the provision of mental healthcare. For example, implement measures to increase appropriate help-seeking behaviour, and improved integration of health and mental health services to ensure consistency of care.

Medical Symposium

Early Intervention in Psychosis: The Singapore Experience

- A/Prof Swapna Verma, Senior Consultant and Chief, Department of Early Psychosis Intervention, IMH

A/Prof Verma emphasised the importance of early psychosis intervention as it could improve the outcome of patients with first-episode psychosis and reduce disability. She introduced several programmes currently in place, including the Early Psychosis Intervention Programme; Support for Wellness Achievement Programme; and educational Video Compact Discs on psychosis. She alerted the audience to detect psychosis early by looking out for the prodromal phase, which is also known as the At Risk Mental State.

An Update on Insomnia

- A/Prof Ng Beng Yeong, Senior Consultant and Head, Department of Psychiatry, SGH

A/Prof Ng explained the diagnostic criteria for primary and psychophysiologic insomnia. He also pointed out the prevalence of insomnia diagnoses, where 46% of patients are diagnosed with psychiatric disorders. He recommended a combination strategy that utilises a pharmacologic agent

and behavioural strategy for short term and long term benefits. He showed statistics that stated that 70% to 80% of patients benefit from the pharmacologic agent, such as benzodiazepine, but few become good sleepers.

Panel Discussion: Physician Heal Thyself (Doctors' Mental Health)

- Dr Calvin Fones, Consultant Psychiatrist, Fones Clinic, Gleneagles Medical Centre
- A/Prof Goh Lee Gan, Senior Consultant, Division of Family Medicine, National University Health System
- Prof Low Cheng Hock, Emeritus Consultant, Department of General Surgery, TTSH
- Dr Noorul Fatha As'art (Moderator), Assistant Director, Non-Communicable Diseases Branch, Epidemiology and Disease Control Division, Ministry of Health

Unlike previous years, the panel discussion for this year's medical symposium revolved around doctor-related issues, instead of patients. Prof Low highlighted that young doctors today face many changes, stress and uncertainty, especially with the new American-style residency system. A/Prof Goh then emphasised the importance of acquiring the ability to respond to changes and he believed that when you take care of others, others will also take care of you. Sharing his experience as an educator, Dr Fones expressed confidence in young doctors that they will find a way to cope with challenges and stressors. Prof Low tied the convention's theme on mental health to the discussion as he touched on the sensitive issue of doctors with mental health. Despite the fear of being stigmatised, he felt that doctors should fulfil their responsibility to their patients by addressing their own mental health issues.

The 43rd SMA Medical Convention closed to resounding applause. The Convention Committee Co-Chairpersons, Dr Ang Peng Chye and Dr Noorul Fatha As'art, and the rest of the committee wish to thank keynote speakers Mr Gerard Ee and A/Prof Chua Hong Choon, all invited speakers, guests and participants for taking time off to participate in the event. The committee would also like to express its appreciation to the convention's main sponsor, Tote Board, and co-sponsors, Health Promotion Board, Lee Foundation and National Healthcare Group. We hope to see you at next year's convention! **SMA**



A/Prof Ng Beng Yeong

A/Prof Swapna Verma

L to R: Dr Calvin Fones, A/Prof Goh Lee Gan, Dr Noorul Fatha As'art and Prof Low Cheng Hock