

2. Marginalized Social Groups: Enhance Understanding and Support

Colleagues from various departments (Sociology, Psychology, and Social Work) have conducted research on different types of marginalized groups in our communities, such as

- asylum seekers,
- children with dyslexia,
- caregivers of schizophrenia patients,
- youths with psychosis, and
- rehabilitated/drug addicts.

In these projects, social workers, counsellors, hospitals, NGOs, rehabilitation centres, and government departments were often heavily involved at different stages in the implementation of the project. Research findings were not only published in refereed articles, but also appeared in teaching kits and seminars which directly addressed the needs of policy makers, professional bodies, and communities.



Dr. Ruth Zhou's impact case

"Empowering caregivers of people with schizophrenia: comparing intervention effectiveness of family link education programme (FLEP), collective narrative practice group (CNPg) and integrative peer support growth group (IPSGG)" (UGC/FDS15/M01/15) (1 January, 2016 to 31 October, 2018)

List of collaborative or supporting organizations

- Hong Kong East Kowloon Psychiatric Centre
- Kwai Chung Hospital
- Rehabilitation Department of Wuhan Mental Health Centre
- Rehabilitation Centre of Wuhan Mental Health Hospital
- Hong Kong FamilyLink Mental Health Advocacy Association

Findings:

Dr. Ruth Zhou's project team developed a new intervention approach (Integrative Peer Support Growth Group (IPSGG)) to support and empower caregivers for people with schizophrenia in collaboration with hospitals, psychiatric centres, and mental health centres. The Integrative Peer Support Growth Group (IPSGG) was found to be effective in improving family cohesion, family expressiveness, mental health, inner resources, positive care giving experience, and reducing negative care giving experience.

Publications:

- (1) Zhou, D. H. R., Chiu, Y. L. M., Lo T. L. W., Lo, W. F. A., Wong, S. S., Luk, K. L., Leung, C. H. T., Yu C. K., & Chang, Y. S. G. (2020). An unexpected visitor and a sword play: A randomized controlled trial of collective narrative therapy groups for primary carers of people with schizophrenia. *Journal of Mental Health*.
- (2) Zhou, D. H. R., Chiu, Y. L. M., Lo T. L. W., Lo, W. F. A., Wong, S. S., Luk, K. L., Leung, C. H. T., Yu C. K., & Chang, Y. S. G. (2020). Outside-in or inside-out? A randomized controlled trial of two empowerment approaches for family caregivers of people with schizophrenia. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*. 41 (9), 761-772.
- (3) Zhou, D. H. R. Lo, T. L. W., Chiu, Y. L. M. & Lo, W. F. A. (2019). *Convoy of recovery: Healing of Psychosis*. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press. (周德慧、盧德臨、趙雨龍、盧慧芬(編)。
護航復元—思覺失調的療愈。香港：香港城市大學出版社。)



The project has:

- enhanced the coping skills of caregivers;
- improved family relationships and facilitated the recovery of schizophrenia outpatients;
- strengthened the intervention programme for schizophrenia outpatients; and
- produced a set of manuals to support the recovery of schizophrenia outpatients

A set of eight manuals for clinical and mental health professionals and social workers were published by the research team in 2020.



The project has not only raised awareness among mental health professionals in Hong Kong, but also those in Wuhan, China. The rehabilitation centre of the Wuhan Mental Health Hospital contacted the research team and signed a contract with the co-investigator, Dr. Y. L. Chiu, to adopt the Family Link Education Programme (FLEP) in supporting family caregivers of severe mental illness. In August 2019, Dr. Chiu, Dr. Zhou, and two other peer counsellors collaborated with psychiatrists, social workers, and caregiver peer volunteers, and provided three-day intensive training for the FLEP programme. Wuhan Mental Health Hospital is also considering to adopt the Integrative Peer Support Growth Group (IPSGG) to support family caregivers of severe mental illness.

Three training programmes and sharing sessions were held for caregivers, mental health nurses, and social workers in Wuhan. A total of 90 psychiatrists and mental health nurses, social workers, and caregivers of schizophrenia patients attended these training sessions

The project also gained positive media attention in Wuhan. In particular, the training programme for caregivers of schizophrenia patients conducted during 15–17 August, 2018 was reported by:

- Wuhan Evening News, a newspaper which has a daily circulation of around 230,000 copies
- Chutian Metropolis Daily, a newspaper with a daily circulation of around 500,000 copies. It also published a personal interview on Dr. Zhou about her work to support caregivers.



《多元化精神康復理論與實踐》培訓班
(2018年8月14日)

Beneficiaries:

- Professionals: mental health nurses, psychiatrists, peer counsellors, social workers
- Caregivers: caregiver peer volunteers, family caregivers
- Schizophrenia patients

Upon the completion of this project, Dr. Zhou and her team extended the research and started another FDS proposal entitled “An Effectiveness Study of a Narrative Life-design Vocational Counselling Paradigm for High-functioning Youth with Psychosis” (UGC/FDS15/M03/19) in 2019.



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Supporting Family Caregivers to Enhance Mental Health Care for People with Schizophrenia

Dr. Ruth Dehui Zhou, in collaboration with Dr. Marcus Yu Lung Chiu at the City University of Hong Kong, received funding from RGC to conduct a project entitled "Empowering Caregivers of People with Schizophrenia: Comparing Intervention Effectiveness of Family Link Education Programme (FLEP), Collective Narrative Practice Group (CNP) and Integrative Peer Support Growth Group (IPSGG)". The research findings show that these three intervention approaches each have their unique strength in supporting caregivers of people with schizophrenia. Among them, the Integrative Peer Support Growth Group (IPSGG) emphasizes both training in mental health knowledge and exploring the inner resource of caregivers. This approach has shown a longer-term effect on helping them explore their inner resource, improving the positive caregiving experience, and strengthening their family coping skills than existing psychoeducational and narrative interventions for caregiver support.

Improving family relationship and facilitating the recovery of schizophrenia outpatients

Mental health nurses and psychiatrists implemented the integrative caregiving support group intervention developed by the research team, at the East Kowloon Psychiatric Centre from January 2016 to May 2018. As many as 194 family caregivers were involved. The mental health professionals recognized not only the improved family coping skills of the caregiver participants who took part in the intervention groups, but also the positive effect on the schizophrenia outpatients whom they were taking care of. The representative from Kwai Chung Hospital reported at the International Conference on Recovery-oriented Services and Policy Planning in Mental Health at

the University of Hong Kong on 12 January 2018 that an improved family relationship and a stronger determination for recovery on the part of the schizophrenia outpatients were clearly notable.

Raising awareness among mental health professionals in Asia on the support to caregivers

- Psychiatrists and mental health nurses at the Hong Kong East Kowloon Psychiatric Centre cited the research results to clinical professionals at the Hospital Convention 2018 held in Hong Kong on 7-8 May and mentioned the importance of supporting family caregivers of people with mental health issues.
- Family caregiver groups in Taiwan, Malaysia, and Thailand indicated their interest in the idea of an integrative caregiver support group after learning of the research results of the project team, at the International Conference on Recovery-oriented Services and Policy Planning in Mental Health at the University of Hong Kong on 12 January 2018.
- Dr. Zhou was invited by the Wuhan Mental Health Center to give talks on her research findings to several psychiatrists and around 30 mental health nurses on 14 August 2018. She also shared findings with more than 30 social workers from different districts in the Wuhan area on 16 October 2018. These lectures were well-received and raised awareness among professionals and social workers on the importance of support being given to caregivers of mental health patients.
- At the invitation of the rehabilitation department of the Wuhan Mental Health Center, Dr. Zhou and two Family Link volunteers conducted an intensive training programme for caregivers of 30 families with schizophrenia patients on 15-17 August 2018. The training was well-received and the Wuhan Evening News, a newspaper which has a daily circulation of around 230,000 copies, reported the event. On 8 October 2018, Chutian Metropolis Daily,



a newspaper with a daily circulation of around 500,000 copies, published a personal interview on Dr. Zhou and her work with family caregivers.

- Dr. Chiu also presented his work with family caregivers and offered a short summary of the findings of this project to 80 attendees at the Symposium: Greater Bay Area Mental Health Services Development and Challenges, at Macau Polytechnic on 30 November to 1 December 2018.

Improving the health care programme for schizophrenia outpatients by introducing additional support to caregivers

- The rehabilitation centre of the Wuhan Mental Health Hospital contacted the research team and plans to strengthen caregiver support by adopting its caregiver support programme.
- The medical officer in charge of Zhuhai Mental Health Centre contacted the research team and has plans to adopt its caregiver support education programme and to collaborate with the research team on caregiver support research.

Publications:

Zhou, D. H. R. Lo, T. L. W., Chiu, Y. L. M. & Lo, W. F. A. (In Press). Voyage of recovery: Healing of Psychosis. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press.

Zhou, D. H. R. & Wong, S. S. (In Press). Stories of family caregivers: Theatre of life. In D. H. R. Zhou, T. L. W. Lo, Y. L. M. Chiu, & W. F. A. Lo. (In Press). Voyage of recovery: Healing of Psychosis. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press.