



Dr. Zhou Dehui, Ruth

Department of Counselling and Psychology

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.