

## Supporting Disadvantaged Social Groups



### Professor Cheung Yuet Wah

*Department of Sociology*

#### Raising Awareness of the Importance of Post-treatment Relapse Prevention for Young Rehabilitated Drug Abusers in Hong Kong

Among the drug studies previously conducted by Professor Yuet-Wah Cheung in collaboration with Professor Nicole Cheung of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, two longitudinal projects have borne special implications for drug treatment and rehabilitation services.<sup>3</sup> The first project (conducted in 2000-2003) studied a sample of 571 heroin drug addicts (baseline of three waves of interviews) and found that self-efficacy, social capital, life satisfaction, and correct job attitude were protective factors for continuation of drug use (Cheung, YW, *A Brighter Side*, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2009). These recommendations have, to various extents, been adopted in various treatment and rehabilitation services provided by NGOs, such as psychosocial training emphasizing positive group and peer support; vocational training for developing positive work attitude and reintegration into society; and raising life satisfaction. In particular, SARDA (Society for the Aid & Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers, the largest NGO T&R agency in Hong Kong) has stated in its 2012 Year Plan of its Counselling Service for MTP (Methadone Treatment Programme) Patients that "We help our clients to increase satisfaction in family relationships, recreational activities, social networks and vocation for reducing the probability of continuing or resuming drug use".

The significance of "life satisfaction" as a strong predictor for discontinuation of drug use is also evident in the second longitudinal study (conducted in 2009-2012) of a sample of 751 (baseline of six waves of interviews) young psychoactive drug abusers. Data of the study were later re-analyzed and published as a book (Cheung, YW & Nicole Cheung, *Psychoactive Drug Abuse in Hong Kong*, Singapore: Springer, 2018). Life satisfaction as a strong protective factor against relapse is an important clue for developing a model that can strengthen existing relapse prevention strategies. If the life satisfaction of young treated addicts can be enhanced after they finish their treatment programmes, then they should be able to guard themselves against subsequent relapses.

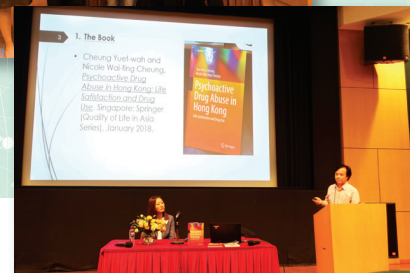
The finding of a strong relationship between life satisfaction and continuation/discontinuation of drug use has been disseminated to a large audience in the drug field, ranging from the Commissioner for Narcotics of Narcotics Division, to staff of a large number of agencies, including SARDA, the largest NGO T&R agency in Hong Kong. Awareness of the finding has stimulated them to find ways to enhance the life satisfaction of their clients after they have finished the programmes.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Cheung has in the past 20 years served as Member of Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN), Chair of Research Advisory Group (RAG) of Narcotics Division, Member of Executive Committee of SARDA, and Chair of Research Committee of SARDA. He has been frequently consulted by Narcotics Division, SARDA, and other NGOs. Dr. Nicole W.T. Cheung has served on the Commission on Youth, and Treatment and Rehabilitation Subcommittee of ACAN. Currently, she is a member of the Research Advisory Group of Narcotics Division.

- Book launch of *Psychoactive Drug Abuse in Hong Kong* (based on re-analysis of data of the 2nd longitudinal study) (4/6/2018)

**Title of presentation:** A Closer Look at Psychoactive Drug Abuse in Hong Kong

**No. of attending audience:** 50, including Commissioner for Narcotics and her staff, staff of SARDA and other agencies



- Staff meeting of SARDA (23/8/2018)

**Title of presentation:** Sharing of the findings with SARDA staff

**No. of attending audience:** 40, including frontline social workers and administrators of SARDA



- Drug Liaison Committee meeting, organized by Narcotics Division (14/11/2018)

**Title of presentation:** Post-treatment Relapse Prevention: What More Can We Do?

**No. of attending audience:** 40, all agency representatives

- Meeting with Caritas HK staff (11/12/2018)

Consulted on issues of drug abusing mothers; Prof. Cheung also presented his life satisfaction findings and introduced his post-treatment relapse prevention plan; Mr. Leung gave a very positive response to the "life planning" approach for treated clients. He would inform his head in Caritas about this, and would arrange for him to meet with Prof. Cheung to discuss how his organization could participate in the effectiveness study by providing the study with departing clients.

**No. of attending audience:** 3, Mr. Wai-leung Chan, Service Head, Youth and Community Service, Community Development Service, Caritas HK, and two staff members.

## Publications:

Cheung Yuet-Wah and Nicole W.T. Cheung  
2018 *Psychoactive Drug Abuse in Hong Kong: Life Satisfaction and Drug Use*. Singapore: Springer.

Cheung Yuet-Wah and Nicole W.T. Cheung  
2018 "Adolescent drug abuse in Hong Kong: Prevalence, psychosocial correlates and prevention." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, forthcoming.