

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 (CNP) 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—思覺失調的療癒。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.



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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.