

MIND OVER MATTER

心勝於物

Local charity Mind Hong Kong has developed a series of training programmes and online resources to destigmatise mental health in Hong Kong.

本地慈善組織Mind HK開發了一系列訓練課程和網上資源，以消除香港對精神健康問題的汙名。

Words 文 Chermaine Lee

Hong Kong ranked the fifth ‘most stressed’ population in the 2018 Cigna 360 Well-Being Survey (which covered 23 countries and territories) and, according to the Hospital Authority, the number of residents seeking treatment for mental problems rose 30 per cent, from 20,000 in 2011 to around 30,000 in 2016.

That’s why Mind Hong Kong believes that talking about psychological wellbeing is essential. Launched in 2017 under the umbrella of the Patient Care Foundation – a healthcare charity established by obstetrician-gynecologist Dr Lucy Lord and Eric Chen, Department of Psychiatry head at University of Hong Kong – Mind Hong Kong aims to destigmatise mental health in the city.

The organisation approaches the problem from all angles: They provide training and support, raise awareness through online and offline campaigns, and provide a hub of informative online content.

“What we’ve seen in Hong Kong is that there’s a big lack of awareness around mental health problems. A lot of people are suffering and struggling without the support they need,” says Dr Hannah Reidy, the CEO of Mind Hong Kong.

“People often recognise they’re in a bad mood or show physical manifestations of stress – like stomach pains or sleeplessness – but instead of addressing the underlying psychological issues behind it, they try to treat their surface-level symptoms. This can sometimes result in unhelpful coping strategies, such as avoidance or self-medication.”

SETTING A NEW STANDARD

The available support for those experiencing mental health problems in Hong Kong is far from international standards. There are currently 355 psychiatrists employed by the Hospital Authority and roughly 160 private practitioners. That’s 6.9 psychiatrists per 100,000 people, compared with 10.54 in the US and 14.68 in Canada, according to the World Health Organization.

Currently, there are three major avenues available for those seeking affordable mental support. These include an Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness in every district (which provides counselling and re-integration services to mentally ill patients), affordable public services via the Hospital Authority (HK\$135 for

根據2018年信諾「360°健康指數」調查，香港是調查覆蓋的23個國家和地區中壓力第五大的地區。而醫院管理局（醫管局）的數據顯示，尋求精神診療的本地居民從2011年的兩萬人增加到2016年的三萬人，增長了三成。

這就是為甚麼Mind HK相信，討論心理健康是有必要的。2017年，Mind HK由眷顧患者基金會成立（基金會發起人為婦產科醫生Lucy Lord和香港大學精神病學教授Eric Chen），致力消除心理健康問題在香港的汙名。

該組織全方位地應對這個問題：他們提供訓練和支援，通過線上和線下活動來增進人們的認知，並且建立了一個資訊豐富的網上中心。

「我們在香港看到的是，人們對心理健康問題的認知嚴重不足。許多人正在受苦和掙扎，但得不到所需的支援。」Mind HK的行政總裁、Hannah Reidy博士說。

「人們通常能夠意識到自己心情不好，或者出現壓力大的生理反應，比如肚痛或失眠，但他們都不會處理根本上的心理問題，而只是嘗試治療表面症狀。他們有時會以無用的策略應對，比如逃避或自行服藥。」

設定新標準

香港對精神健康病人的支援與國際標準相去甚遠。目前醫管局聘請了355名精神科醫生，另外有大約160名私家醫生，也就是每10萬人大約有6.9名精神科醫生。而根據世界衛生組織的數據顯示，在美國，每10萬人有10.54名精神科醫生，而加拿大則有14.68名。

目前，尋求支援者可負擔的精神健康服務主要有三大來源，包括各區的精神健康綜合社區中心（對精神病患者提供諮詢和重新融入社會的服務）、醫管局轄下的公營醫療服務（首次看診費用為135元港幣，之後每次80元），以及NGO提供的免費或低收費服務。

「要在公共醫療系統看一次精神科醫生，人們可能要等上兩年半，更別提只有26%的病人說他們真的會去尋求醫生協助。」Reidy說。

就算人們知道自己需要求助，他們往往都很怕走出來，因為在香港社會，精神健康問題往往被視為恥辱。Reidy補充道：「人們認為，如果他們不參與社交，或者不是一直在享受生活，人們對他們的看法就會改變。人們很怕要向他人承認自己其實不太好，而且需要幫助。」

為了提供支援，Mind HK開發了一個免費數據庫，裡面集合了來自姊妹機構Mind UK的逾2,000頁資料，已全部被譯為繁體中文，並補充了本地化的資訊。這些資源涵蓋了方方面面，從解釋躁鬱症到精神分裂症，

initial visit; HK\$80 per visit thereafter), and either free or low-cost services via NGOs.

“People can wait up to 2.5 years to see a psychiatrist in the government system, not to mention that only about 26 per cent of patients said they would actually seek help,” says Reidy.

Even if they recognise that they might need support, people are often afraid to come forward because there is a lot of shame around mental health problems in Hong Kong society.

“People think that if they are not socialising and having a great time constantly, it will change others’ perceptions of them,” adds Reidy. “There’s a real worry about admitting that you’re not doing so well and need help.”

To provide support, Mind Hong Kong created a database of free resources by gathering more than 2,000 pages of content from sister organisation Mind UK, translating it to Traditional Chinese, then supplementing with localised information. The resources cover everything from explaining bipolar disorders to schizophrenia, as well as debunking common misconceptions such as the difference between clinical depression and feeling depressed.

Mind Hong Kong has also taken its work offline by offering 12-hour courses that train parents, educators, patients and advocates in Mental Health First Aid. During these sessions, which span from single evenings to multi-day courses, participants learn how to manage mental health emergencies and identify symptoms of mental health issues, such as panic attacks, anxiety or even suicidal intentions.

The need for these classes, says Reidy, stems from Hongkongers’ reluctance to talk about mental health. Due to long-standing social taboos, many people do not have a working knowledge of mental health conditions and concerns. Often, they do not recognise serious symptoms or know how to support loved ones.

Mind Hong Kong also launched a series of online campaigns in 2018, including #LetsTalk, which endeavours to start conversations about mental health and change public perception. Reidy hopes that by breaking the social stigma around mental health issues, more people feel comfortable to share and seek help.



STARTING YOUNG

While Mind Hong Kong works with people of all ages, the organisation is currently developing additional programmes for young people, who are particularly susceptible to stress and mental disorders. One in three young people between 6 and 24 years old suffers from stress, anxiety or depression, according to a 2018 survey by the Hong Kong Playground Association.

To support this vulnerable demographic, Mind Hong Kong teamed up with KELY Support Group – a local NGO that works with young adults with substance abuse issues – to launch the Coolminds campaign.

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以至釋除各種常見誤解，例如確診抑鬱症和感到抑鬱、焦慮、緊張之間的差別。

Mind HK也在線下展開工作，提供12小時課程以訓練家長、教育工作者、病人和倡議者，他們稱之為「精神健康急救」。在連續數晚或者數天的課程中，參與者會學習如何處理緊急的精神健康問題，以及辨識精神問題的症狀。

Reidy說，這些課程的需求源於香港人不願意討論精神健康。由於社會禁忌長期存在，許多人並無關於精神健康狀況和問題的基本認知。他們通常不能辨識嚴重的症狀，也不知道如何支援自己所愛的人。

Mind HK也在2018年啓動了一系列網上運動，包括#LetsTalk，嘗試開展有關精神健康的討論和改變公眾觀感。Reidy希望，通過打破精神健康問題的社會汙名，讓更多人願意分享和求助。

動員年輕人

Mind HK除了為任何年齡的人提供服務外，同時也正開發專門給年輕人的額外課程，因為後者更容易受到壓力和精神問題的困擾。香港遊樂場協會在2018年的一項調查發現，香港6到24歲之間的兒童和青少年中，有三分之一承受著壓力、焦慮和抑鬱。

為了支援這個脆弱的人群，Mind HK與幫助年輕人處理濫藥和酗酒問題的本地NGO「啓勵扶青會」合作，啓動了Coolminds計劃。

這個計劃將於今年秋季啓動，計劃營運三年，目標是教會年輕人處理精神健康問題的主要技能和認知，讓他們可以更好地辨識和處理自己的情緒。作為計劃的一部分，Mind HK也為家長和教師提供精神健康知識訓練，讓他們可以更好地幫助年輕人。

Coolminds也會邀請曾有精神健康問題的年輕人來與高中生分享他們的經歷。「在安全和受控的環境討論這些經歷，一定能讓學生知道討論精神健康問題和求助都是可以的。」Reidy說。

隨著這個計劃的展開，該組織還計劃推出專用網站和APP，為學生提供資源。這些網上平台會與本地精神健康專家合作，為面對高壓處境中的青少年提供策略、意見和資源，例如那些正準備考試和申請大學的人。

大環境

Reidy說，自兩年前建立以來，Mind HK已經看到香港社會對精神健康問題的接受程度有所上升，認知也多了，但前路仍然漫長，尤其是在集體態度方面。



Launching this autumn, the three-year campaign equips young people with essential mental health skills and insights, so they can better recognise and manage their emotions. As part of the programme, Mind Hong Kong also offers mental health literacy training sessions for parents and teachers so they are better prepared to help youth.

Coolminds will also invite youth who had mental health issues to share their experiences with other high school students.

“Talking about these experiences in a safe and controlled environment is a surefire way to allow students to know that it is okay to talk about mental health issues and seek help,” says Reidy.

In line with the campaign launch, the organisation plans to introduce a dedicated website and app that provides targeted resources for students. In collaboration with local mental health specialists, the web platforms will provide strategies, insights and resources for teens who are facing high-pressure situations, such as exams and university applications.

THE BIG PICTURE

Since launching Mind Hong Kong two years ago, Reidy says the organisation has witnessed an increased level of mental health acceptance and awareness in Hong Kong but there is still a long way to go, especially when it comes to the city’s collective attitude.

Through its own research and surveys, Mind Hong Kong has found that roughly three out of four people in Hong Kong believe that mental health patients should be better integrated in the society. However, 40 per cent of respondents say they are not willing to live near people with mental health problems. In addition, 40 per cent of respondents believe the main causes of mental illnesses are a lack of self-discipline and willpower.

Hong Kong’s notoriously intense work culture and high cost of living further aggravate the issue. A UBS report in 2016 found that the city has the longest hours in the world – Hongkongers work an average of 50.1 hours per week, compared with 37.8 hours in Beijing and 30.8 hours in Paris.

“Hong Kong’s work culture is one of presenteeism, where people show up even if they are not productive at work. People feel pressured to stay at work until their boss goes home,” says Reidy. “Sometimes, there is a ‘pull’ factor to stay at work, as rent and living costs are sky-high here so accommodation is small, cramped and often shared with many other family members – which can be stressful in itself.”

The combination of high-pressure lifestyles, lack of awareness and cultural taboos has created a situation where mental health issues are common yet often go untreated. Looking ahead, Reidy hopes to see the government provide more adequate care across the board and calls upon health insurers to include mental healthcare

A Mind Hong Kong training session.

Mind HK訓練課程。

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in coverage packages. In Hong Kong, mental healthcare is rarely covered under most health insurance plans and sessions can cost anywhere from HK\$1,300 to HK\$5,000 per session for private care.

“It is important for all healthcare professionals to treat mental health problems with the same care and attention that they would physical health problems, in order to ensure their patients receive the support they deserve,” said Reidy. “And in terms of cultural acceptance, it would be a dream for us to see more positive portrayals of mental health across Hong Kong.” ■

Mind HK所做的研究和調查顯示，香港有大約四分之三的人認為，精神病人應該更好地融入社會。不過，40%的受訪者表示，他們不希望住在精神病人附近。此外，40%的受訪者相信，精神疾病的主要來源是不夠自律和意志力。

香港臭名遠播的高壓工作文化和高昂生活成本讓問題更加嚴重。2016年瑞銀的一份報告指出，香港的工時全球最長，港人每週平均工作50.1小時，而在北京的人是37.8小時，在巴黎的人是30.8小時。

Reidy說：「香港的職場文化之一是超時工作，也就是人們就算沒甚麼工作效率，也要在公司出現。人們覺得必須留在公司工作，直到老闆回家。有時，留在公司的一個『拉力』是，昂貴的租金和生活成本令人們的居住空間狹窄，而且往往要跟許多家庭成員分享空間，這本身也很有壓力。」

高壓生活、缺乏認知和文化禁忌加起來，使得精神問題在香港很常見，卻很少被處理。展望將來，Reidy希望政府可以全面提供更充分的保障，並呼籲人壽保險公司在保險計劃中加入精神健康保障。在香港，大部分人壽醫療保險計劃都不包括精神健康，而每看一次私家精神科醫生可能要花上1,300到5,000元港幣。

Reidy說：「醫護界全體專業人員以對生理健康問題同樣的關注應對精神健康問題，是很重要的，這可以保障病人獲得他們應得的支援。至於文化上的接受，能看到香港對於精神健康問題有更正面的描述，是我們的夢想。」■

Learn more 詳情請看 mind.org.hk