



香港賽馬會慈善信託基金
The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust
同心同步同進 RIDING HIGH TOGETHER



Faculty of
Social Sciences
The University of Hong Kong
香港大學社會科學學院



賽馬會樂齡同行計劃
Jockey Club
Holistic Support Project
for Elderly Mental Wellness

Press Release

Press Conference of Community-wide Survey on Awareness and Attitude towards Elderly Depression in HK 2018

February 1, 2018

Hong Kong is facing a rapidly ageing population and the number of singleton elderly has been constantly increasing. According to a study, about 10% of the elderly population in Hong Kong have depressive symptoms. While the Chinese New Year is approaching, elderly can be at higher risk of suffering from emotion frustration with festive atmosphere. Subsequent to the launch of The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust-funded “JC JoyAge: Jockey Club Holistic Support Project for Elderly Mental Wellness” (JC JoyAge) in October 2016, the HKU Team ran a two-phase community-wide survey on awareness and attitude towards elderly depression in Hong Kong.

The first phase of the survey was conducted between August and September 2017 with the assistance of the HKU Public Opinion Programme. The survey is aimed at understanding the knowledge and attitudes towards elderly depression among Hong Kong citizens and facilitating the design of public education campaign for the Project. The survey has collected data from 1,332 Hong Kong citizens aged 20 years old or above with a response rate of 58%.

Mr. Leong Cheung, Executive Director of Charities and Community of The Hong Kong Jockey Club observed that the Club had been putting emphasis on the quality of life of the elderly, and had designated Elderly Services as one of its strategic focus areas. “The Club hopes to promote positive ageing through a series of preventive support initiatives, thereby transforming the elderly’s role from a passive one to an active one, so that they can continue to interact with the community,” he said. “I hope everyone can care more about the older people around us and become their strong backing, enabling them to enjoy their life in the community.”

Professor Terry Lum, Project Director of JC JoyAge and Professor of Department of Social Work and Social Administration of the Faculty of Social Sciences, HKU announced the survey result. The survey results showed that most respondents agreed that depression is common in old age. More than half (52%) of the respondents estimated at least 10% of elderly are suffering from depression, even up to 30% predicted by half of them. Over 85% of the respondents agreed to help the emotionally distressed elderly friends, relatives and neighbours.

However, the survey also illustrated the common myths about elderly depression amid Hong Kong population. Half of respondents failed to recognise depression is not a normal feature in ageing. About 40% of them did not take it serious when the elderly express suicidal thoughts, and 48% were not aware that memory problem can be one of the depression symptoms. Up to 75% of them thought that it would be helpful to depressed elderly by reminding them to count their blessings and advising them to focus on positive thinking.

Professor Lum pointed out that: “People will generally associate ageing with negative images such as downhearted, solitude and hopelessness, which easily normalise the phenomenon of elderly depression. Despite the physiological causes of elderly depression, psychosocial factors such as solitude and loneliness are even worth our attention because everyone in our society can make the change.” He recalled, “What impressed me the most during my recent visit to a singleton elderly is that he repeatedly mentioned his son only visiting him once a year.” For most of the solitude elderly, visit by friends and family are all the sustenance they need as explained by Professor Lum.

Dr. Gloria Wong, Co-Principal Investigator of JC JoyAge and Assistant Professor of Department of Social Work and Social Administration of the Faculty of Social Sciences, HKU reminded the public to pay more attention to the changes of elderly’s conditions and their complaints as elderly depression could be expressed as physical discomforts or cognitive problems. Also, spending more time with elderly and exploring new interests with them could be helpful to enhance their resiliency in facing depression. “Non-judgmental, empathic listening and companionship is vital.” Dr. Wong said.

To address the survey results, the JC JoyAge targets to prevent elderly depression through building the community capital to promote mental wellness of the elderly. The three-year “JC JoyAge” pilot project will be implemented with three main components, including Professional Service Development, Outreach & Support Team Development and Community Education & Public Awareness. Through training of social workers in partner organisations as well as over 130 “Peer Supporters”, a strong support network will be built to identify and support other vulnerable elderly who need help in the community as well as to enhance neighbourhood cohesiveness. Since October 2017, JC JoyAge has been officially launched in four pilot areas in Kwun Tong, Kwai Chung, Tseung Kwan O and Sham Shui Po. In the first 3 months of service, the newly trained “Peer Supporters” and social workers have already conducted over 2,300 engagement sessions, getting in touch with nearly 150 at-risk or depressed elderly. Many of them have been involved in intervention service with companion of “Peer Supporters” and regained their happiness in their lives by stepping out from depression.

Ms. Tso, “Peer Supporter” of JC JoyAge and Ms. Chan, service recipient also shared about their experiences on how the Project helped them to get rid of depression. They both agreed that by empowering the community network, the support for elderly mental health could be strengthened.

For media enquiries, please contact

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About “JC JoyAge: Jockey Club Holistic Support Project for Elderly Mental Wellness”

In 2016, The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust approved funding of over HK\$87 million to initiate the three-year “JC JoyAge: Jockey Club Holistic Support Project for Elderly Mental Wellness” (JC JoyAge). Through cross-sectoral collaboration, JC JoyAge has been piloting a community-based supporting network for our senior citizens to enhance their resiliency in facing the challenges of ageing. The project has implemented in four districts – Kwai Chung, Kwun Tong, Sham Shui Po and Tseung Kwan O – with three main components: (1) capacity building programmes for service providers to enhance their knowledge and competence in helping those in needs; (2) to establish a new collaborative service model to bridge the medical and social sectors with a view to reducing the risk of elderly depression, or relieving the depressive symptoms of the elderly through outreach engagements, prevention, and early intervention programmes; and (3) a “Peer Supporters” initiative in which trained seniors will be able to identify and support other vulnerable elderly who need help in the community, and at the same time enhance neighbourhood cohesiveness. In addition, public education activities will be organised to improve the mental health literacy and enhance social support in the community. Project partners include The University of Hong Kong, Caritas-Hong Kong, Christian Family Service Centre, Haven of Hope Christian Services, Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Lady MacLehose Centre, the Mental Health Association of Hong Kong, and the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association. Please visit: <http://www.jcjoyage.hk> for details.

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