Enhancement of vocational service for people with mental illness:
Incorporating research evidence into clinical practice

Wong LH(1), Chiu WC(1), Law KM(1)
(1) Occupational Therapy Department, Castle Peak Hospital

Introduction
Stable employment improves not only the economical status, but also clinical outcomes of people with mental illness (MI). However, according to the Organization of Economy Collaboration and Development (OECD) report in 2014, the unemployment rate among people with MI is 2 to 4.5 times higher than people without MI. In clinical practice guidelines for major psychiatric diagnostic groups (e.g. schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder, etc.) vocational rehabilitation is only briefly mentioned. Therefore, it is vital to enrich the evidence base for clinical practice. Since early 2012, the occupational therapy department in Castle Peak Hospital has formed a working group on work assessment and rehabilitation. One of the primary goals is to enhance service quality by incorporating updated research evidence into clinical practice.

Objectives
To describe how the departmental working group collecting updated research evidences and incorporating them into continuous service development and enhancement

Methodology
Systematic literatures review on factors affecting vocational outcomes of people with MI was employed. Various electronic databases, e.g. Medline, Psycinfo, EMBase, CINAHL, were used as sources of literatures. Studies were appraised with standardised tools (e.g. The CONSORT for RCT studies, READER for other quantitative design studies, etc.). The nature and strength of association between identified factors and vocational outcomes were evaluated. With reference to the ecological/case management model designed by Loisel and associates (2005), factors were categorized into 4 groups: personal factors, health-care factors,
workplace/organizational factors and socio-cultural factors. Subsequent implications for service development was drawn and improvement measured was implemented.

**Result**
In 58 reviewed articles, 7 personal factors (psychopathological characteristics, self-perception, work motivation, work history, social and other personal backgrounds), 4 health-care factors (characteristics of vocational service, duration in vocational service, attributes of staff and medical treatment received), 2 workplace/organization factors (work environment, and nature of post-episode employment) and 3 socio-cultural factors (local employment rate, stigma and welfare system) were identified. Implications on clinical practice and service development are mostly come from personal and health-care factors. All identified personal factors were incorporated as key components when assessing client’s work potential. Also, referring to the health-care factors, continuous quality improvement measures were implemented including development of departmental guidelines for work assessment, revision of vocational service framework, constructing new programs augmenting conventional training, etc. Lastly, on-going training workshops and quality assurance exercise were launched to improve therapists’ knowledge and competence in providing quality care.