



Service Priorities and Programmes
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Strength-based volunteer service scheme for reducing stigma for people with severe mental illness (SMI)

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Introduction

According to the World Psychiatric Association, combating the stigma of mental illness is the priority of mental health providers . Social stigma and social disability are significant problems that compromises psychological health and interrupts the pursuit of life goals for the people with mental illness. Three main interventions have been proven to be effective to counterwork with stigma: protest, education and contact . A contact and educational based volunteer service scheme had been launched for the service users in Yung Fung Shee (YFS) Psychiatric Day Hospital (PDH) since 2013. It created positive social experience for both the service users and general public . It facilitated the service user to build up self-esteem and reduce sense of self-stigmatization. It also helped to change the prejudice of people being contacted by our service users.

Objectives

1.Facilitate positive social contact experience between public and the people with SMI to reduce social stigma 2.Provide opportunities in learning new skills, identifying strengths, attaining a sense of purpose and contributing to society so as to improve self-esteem.

Methodology

Three levels of volunteer service are provided by service users. 1. Center-based level: They provided volunteer work in different Occupational Therapy Department to facilitate daily operation, including helping clerical tasks, organizing festival celebration for other service users, etc. 2. Hospital –based level: They joined the “Green Angel” scheme in Health Resources Centre (HRC) to provide volunteer service in hospital to assist the organization of different community based programs. 3. Community-based level: Cooperated with the Bliss District Elderly Community Centre, a “tele-care for living alone elderly” program was implemented. Service users provided weekly telephone reassurance to living alone elderly. Service was further enhanced for home safety screening, mood checking and cognitive screening.

Result

80 service users joined the scheme and delivered about 632 hours of volunteer service from 2013 to 2017. 1182 living alone elderly had received the tele-care service. Chinese Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used as outcome evaluation of the scheme. Paired Sample T-test showed significant improvement among service users in Question 3 ($p=0.05$), 8($p=0.006$) and total average score ($p=0.014$) indicated that Self-esteem and sense of control over life were also strengthened. Satisfaction survey revealed several aspects of changes in service users including reducing social stigma, improving social relationship and increasing contribution to society. To conclude, volunteer service scheme could be helpful to reduce social stigma and enhance self-acceptance of mental health service users in the community. It is one of a potential effective way to help reintegrating their life back into the community.