



Service Priorities and Programmes
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#社交 summerlab: A Pioneer Summer Programme to Enhance Social Cognition for Adolescents with Mental Illness

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Introduction

Student mental health has been a growing concern lately¹; one of the stresses comes from the relationship and communication with peers. Also, with ever more popular use of online social media and instant messaging, more adolescents are prone to the emotional and cognitive influence of cyberbully².

Objectives

(1) to enhance the ability of adolescents in communicating with peers at school and online; (2) to strengthen skills of adolescents in interpreting social situations including school and social media, avoid “jump to conclusion”; (3) to enhance the social skills of adolescents in cooperating with peers by means of various activities.

Methodology

A laboratory themed pioneer summer programme named “#社交 summerlab” consisted of 10 intensive sessions in August 2017. Social Cognition & Interaction Training (SCIT) was modified and adapted for adolescents and online social situations, along with 10 sessions of activity based programmes had been provided to a small group of high school out-patient students aged from 16 to 20. Adaptations include tailor-made videos capturing school situations, and online interaction in social media and instant messaging with the use of Emojis. Outcome measures were obtained by using the Social Cognition Screening Questionnaire (SCSQ) together with feedback from participants.

Result

There was an overall attendance of 83%. Improvement was shown in post-assessment in terms of jump-to-conclusion and theory of mind subscore in SCSQ. Most of the attendees reported subjective improvement in competence in dealing with social situations, both at school, social network and instant messaging. Their parents also recognized the positive changes in social functioning of their child at school.

Conclusions

#社交 summerlab was effective in improving social cognition and subjective competence of adolescents with mental illness at school, social network and instant messaging. It can serve as an alternative social-learning experience to traditional academic courses for adolescents during summer. Further development of the programme may include outreach services to school or extended individual follow up services.

Reference: 1. Cheung, R. (August 2016). Focus on Hong Kong students' mental health – call for more awareness and assistance. South China Morning Post.

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