Health-in-Mind: mental health awareness programme for adolescents in Hong Kong

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Introduction
Across the world, low level of mental health literacy and mental illness stigma have been recognized as major public health concern. Survey found that young people’s attitude towards psychiatric treatment was rather negative. Only approximately one third of youths diagnosed with mental illnesses received mental health services. In 2001, the WHO called for countries to launch anti-stigma campaign on mental illnesses. In light of the mounting concerns, Kwai Chung Hospital and Mindset, a registered charity of the Jardine Matheson Group, jointly launched the “Health-in-Mind: Youth Mental Health Promotion Programme” (HIM) starting 2002, with the aim to extend youth mental health promotion and anti-stigma campaign to various local secondary schools in Hong Kong.

Objectives
This study aimed to measure the effectiveness of HIM programme in improving adolescents’ mental illnesses recognition and stigmatization.

Methodology
Data were provided by 149 individuals who participated in HIM. Participants were presented with two vignettes depicting one individual suffering from schizophrenia and another major depressive disorder. To each vignette, participants were asked to identify the mental illness and the anticipated prognosis, as well as rated on two stigmatization measures: emotional reactions (e.g. fear, pity, anger) and social distance (e.g. recommend for a job, introduce to a friend).

Result
79.9% and 99.3% of the participants were able to point out the mental problems in the depression and schizophrenia vignettes respectively. Overall, above 87% believed that when given proper treatment, the individuals would recover. For emotional reactions, 21.5% and 60.4% indicated feeling fearful; 91.3% and 90.6% feeling pitiful; 8.7% and 18.1% feeling angry towards the depression and schizophrenia vignettes respectively. For social distance, 94% and 71.1% indicated willingness to engage in social interactions with individuals suffering from depression and schizophrenia.
respectively. Compared with community research using same measures in the West, HIM participants showed more favorable attitude, particularly, in the domain of empathy and social distance, towards mental illnesses. This study provided evidence to the effectiveness of HIM programme in promoting mental health awareness and counteracting psychiatric stigma among adolescents. The study would go on to collect a control group from the general public, in the hope to understand the programme effectiveness using a controlled design.