



## Service Priorities and Programmes Electronic Presentations

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### **Youth-Elderly Inter-generational Ambassador Volunteer Program – The Application of Recovery-Oriented Practice in the Creation of an Elderly-friendly Community**

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#### **Introduction**

Life story work(LSW) is a recovery-oriented practice in which a client's life was reviewed to develop a biography unique to the person. It applies the principle of person-centred care to understand the elderly patient's past life experiences. These experiences were usually unfamiliar to youths in Hong Kong, who might hold negative attitudes or even stigma towards elderly patients with mental illness.

#### **Objectives**

To increase empowerment and wellness in elderly clients with mental illness by developing relationship between youth volunteers and clients into that of 'partners' on the journey of recovery

#### **Methodology**

The current program served as the second phase to a pioneer project(Life Story Work – A Recovery-Oriented Practice in the Care of Psychogeriatric Clients) launched by the Psychogeriatric Team of Kwai Chung Hospital in 2014. It involved the shared preparation of digitalized formats of LSW between the elderly, youth volunteers and nurses. Health talks on mental illness were held in two local secondary schools before the volunteer recruitment process. Recruited student volunteers underwent a training session before taking part in the nurse-led therapeutic program from October 2015 to August 2016. Subjective experiences of each client and student volunteer were recorded. Cognitive function, depressive symptoms and quality of life(QOL) in elderly clients were measured by the Mini-Mental State Examination, Geriatric Depressive Scale and World Health Organization Quality of Life Questionnaire respectively.

#### **Result**

42 student volunteers were recruited. Interventions were provided to 16 community elderly patients who suffered from depression or dementia. Through shared activities and facilitated communications with the youth, our clients were able to express their emotional needs, which could be difficult in old people, and verbalize feelings of being

cared. Student volunteers also showed a more empathetic attitude towards elderly with mental illness. Paired sample T-tests was conducted to evaluate the project. The post-project QOL score was shown to be significantly higher than the pre-project QOL score( $p < .001$ ). No statistically significant difference in cognitive function and depressive symptoms was observed.

The project was received positively by the elderly clients, student volunteers and nurses. Both secondary schools welcomed further cooperation with the hospital. The project will be promoted to other secondary schools in the territory in 2017