

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HKU Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, Facebook and partner social service organisations call for joint efforts to prevent suicides

29 June 2016

The HKJC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (CSRP) of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) held a press conference today (June 29) with the theme “Connected for Life”. The “Help a Friend” booklet, which seeks to provide guidance and support to those emotionally distressed, was released on the occasion. CSRP, Facebook, and other partner organisations hope to take the opportunity to empower the public to act as good Samaritans to care for vulnerable people in society, and encourage members of the community to stay connected for suicide prevention.

In his opening remarks, CSRP Director Professor Yip warned against the stigma prevalent in society towards those having mental problems. He said the situation has been causing people who are emotionally distressed to refrain from seeking professional help, with some do not even know where to begin with. According to the latest findings by the CSRP on student suicide cases in the past two and a half years, around 30% of the deceased had been diagnosed with psychiatric problems, whereas only less than 9% of the deceased were known to social services for their problems. In one of the cases, the victim suspected herself of having psychiatric problems but dared not see a doctor. She merely searched online for information and eventually killed herself out of frustration and hopelessness.

Professor Yip said it would require the whole community’s support to encourage those suffering from distressed to disclose their pain and seek help. He praised some social media platforms, Facebook in particular, for taking up the responsibility to care for the vulnerable members in society providing them guidance and support online. The CSRP was first approached by Facebook, and then partnered with the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (HKFYG) and the Samaritans to jointly publish the booklet, which was written based on research evidence and frontline professionals’ experiences. The booklet, written incorporating young people’s slang language, seeks to empower the public to offer timely assistance to those emotionally distressed or suicidal, with recommended techniques applicable both online and offline. Hong Kong singer and actress Ms. Miriam Yeung joined the effort to urge the public to cherish life and care for the others through a video clip specially created by Facebook.

The booklets will be distributed for free to social workers, teachers, parents, students and people in need by various organisations. The online version can be downloaded from all partner organisations’ websites. CSRP will distribute the booklets to primary and secondary schools that have joined the QEF Quality Thematic Network on Developing Students’ Positive Attitudes and Values, for reference

by frontline social workers and teachers. HKFYG will distribute the booklet to their social workers at schools and youth centres. Save the Children Hong Kong (SCHK) will give out the booklets at its street activities.

Representatives from different organisations introduced their services during the panel sharing session. Mr. George Chen, Head of Public Policy of Facebook Hong Kong & Taiwan, was delighted in partnering with different professional and non-profit making organisations. He said the “Help a Friend” booklet has been Facebook’s first offline product, following its online suicide prevention feature rolled out earlier this month. The booklet was specifically designed to cater for those in need in Hong Kong.

HKFYG Supervisor Ms. Siu Man Hsu agreed that social media is an essential platform for connecting young people. Ms. Hsu shared the Federation’s experience of using social media to reach out to the youths and provide services. She demonstrated to audience how to obtain information of the Federation and its services through Facebook and Whatsapp.

Ms. May Ly, Project Consultant of The Samaritans, pointed out that when young people deal with problems or have negative emotions, they often prefer talking to their friends as they find them more trustworthy and easier to talk to. For this reason, The Samaritans introduced The Young Samaritans Peer Support Programme to inform youth about the causes, signs and prevention strategies of depression, self-harm and suicide. The programme aims to raise awareness of mental health issues and to enhance young people’s listening and communication skills, so as to strengthen peer support. Ms. Ly shared her programme motto with young people - “more listening and less judging”.

SCHK Chief Executive Ms. Amy Fong said the organisation has been providing consultation and counselling services through a parent-child support hotline in collaboration with its partner organisations. It has also been a priority area of service for SCHK to engage with children in the community, to empower them and help them regain a sense of purpose in life.

Finally, Professor Yip said that in the process of producing the “Help a Friend” booklet, he had met a lot of passionate individuals and identified social resources available for those in need. The participants at the conference jointly called for the public’s support for the action plan, namely “Anyone may encounter difficulty, seeking help from others does not necessarily imply weakness. When we notice someone in need of support, we can always utilise the many resources available in society to offer assistance and care. Everyone can become a good Samaritan by being an emphatic communicator and listener, acting both online and offline in our daily lives.”



THE HONG KONG JOCKEY CLUB
Centre for Suicide Research
and Prevention
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
香港大學香港賽馬會防止自殺研究中心



For programme details and photos, please visit: <http://csrp.hku.hk/press-conference-connected-life/>

“Help a Friend” guidance booklet can be downloaded at:

<http://csrp.hku.hk/wecare> or

<https://fbnewsroomus.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/help-a-friend-in-need-hk.pdf>

The video of Ms. Maria Yeung can be downloaded from the below URL after 6 pm on Jun 29th 2016

<https://www.facebook.com/hkucsrp>

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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ABOUT HKJC CENTRE FOR SUICIDE RESEARCH AND PREVENTION (CSRP), HKU

Founded in 2002, the CSRP has been promoting the use of Public Health Approach in tackling suicide problems in Hong Kong. The CSRP has established its reputation in suicide research and prevention worldwide and extended its research scope to well-being of individuals as well as the whole society. The CSRP believes in that empirical research would optimize practices and ultimately contribute to the improvement of a society.

ABOUT THE PARTNERS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

facebook

Facebook was founded in 2004. Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them.



The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (hkfyg.org.hk | m21.hk) was founded in 1960 and is now the city's largest youth service organisation. For the last 54 years, it has been committed to serving the youth of Hong Kong through the provision of a variety of services, activities and programmes, which have an annual attendance of over five million. We encourage youth to reach their fullest potential and with community support, we now have over 60 service units. We also have 12 core services, which include the Youth S.P.O.Ts, M21 Multimedia Services, Employment Services, Youth at Risk Services, Counselling Services, Parenting Services, Leadership Training, Volunteer Services, Education Services, Creativity Education and Youth Exchange, Leisure, Cultural and Sports Services, and Research and Publications. We encourage young people to grow into responsible and dutiful citizens and we now have over 170,000 registered volunteers and 410,000 registered members. We believe that our motto "*HKFYG • Here for You*" reaffirms our commitment and dedication to the young people of Hong Kong.

撒瑪利亞會



24小時中文及多種語言防止自殺服務

The Samaritans is a non-profit, non-religious organisation giving confidential emotional support to people who are suicidal or are in emotional or mental distress through our 24-hour hotline and email service. Our service is provided to anyone regardless of age, creed, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation since 1974. Last year, The Samaritans provided hotline service to over 30,000 callers.



Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In Hong Kong and around the world, we give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share. We have 30 national organizations working together to deliver programmes in around 120 countries. Save the Children Hong Kong was established in 2009.

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