

Press release

For immediate release

**“WeCare 與你同行” HKU Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention
releases latest figures and prevention recommendations on suicide**

Hong Kong, September 9, 2016 – The Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (CSRP) at the University of Hong Kong (HKU), as a member of the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP), marks the World Suicide Prevention Day (September 10) with a series of awareness raising activities which include holding the “WeCare 與你同行” press conference today (September 9) to release the latest suicide statistics, launching of an updated “WeCare” website (<http://wecare.csrp.hku.hk>), and making recommendations on suicide prevention.

World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD) is an initiative launched by the IASP and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2003. Besides the press conference, CSRP has been launching a series of activities in the region.

Updates of suicide figures

Based on figures from the Coroner’s Court, as of June 30, 2016, CSRP estimated that there were 12.6 per 100,000 people who died from suicide in 2015. Standardizing the rate to the world population for comparison with overseas figures, the suicide rate in Hong Kong was estimated to be 9.3 per 100,000, which has been on a downward trend since 2003.

Based on records from the Coroner’s Court, in 2015, there were 70 suicide cases of young people aged 15-24, among them 23 were full-time students. CSRP estimated that the suicide rate of this age group was about 8.5 per 100,000, which is slightly higher compared to the 6.2 per 100,000 in 2014. It is noteworthy in particular that the suicide rate among the male in this age group had increased from 8.3 per 100,000 in 2014 to 12.9 per 100,000 in 2015.

Professor Yip, the Director of CSRP, explained: “The increase in the youth suicide rate in 2015 was related to both an increase in the number of youth suicide incidents and a drop in the youth population.” Professor Yip added: “The youth suicide rate was still relatively lower than that of other age groups. Within the 15-24 age group, only a small proportion of suicide cases involved students. In this regard, society should pay attention not only to the students, but also to other sectors in the age group.”

According to investigation reports and materials provided by the Police Force and the Coroner's Court, for the majority of student suicide cases, the causes could be attributed to lack of positive communication of young people with their parents and relatives. In a number of cases, the victims expressed having prolonged suicidal thoughts but did not have the courage to tell others. The theme for this year's World Suicide Prevention Day is "Connect, Communicate and Care" Professor Yip encouraged those who are having suicidal thoughts to talk to others and seek help. He also urged parents, teachers and social workers to take the initiative to care and understand young people's feelings, as well as to listen to them in a non-judgmental manner.

Connect, Communicate and Care

CSRП invited Jason, a Hong Kong YouTuber with over 440,000 subscribers, to share his story. Jason had had suicidal thoughts during his darkest time and the sexual stereotyping of men in society made it difficult for him to open up and share with others his emotional problems. Fortunately, when he was about to commit suicide, his family called him and gave him the care and support that he earnestly needed. Since then, he has lived a life of passion and becomes a professional YouTuber to inspire young people. After the student suicide cases early this year, Jason called for care for young people through his channel, and encouraged those vulnerable to seek help. The video has attracted over 110,000 views, some comments involved suicidal thoughts and emotional distress which drew concerns and interventions from mental health professionals. At the press conference, Jason appealed to all to show more love and care to their families and friends.

Making good use of social media

Professor Paul Yip pointed out that the social media serves as an important platform to connect with young people, and community members can make good use of the platform to show their care. Compared to face-to-face communication, young people, especially those hidden youths, would find it easier to express their thoughts and feelings on social media. Taking Jason's social media channel as an example, more than half of his subscribers are below 24 years old, many of them video game players. His channel has served as a platform for professionals to connect, communicate and care for those who have suicidal tendency. His story helps spread the message that "Whether it's online or offline, as long as you care, a warm word is all it takes to save a life".

WeCare

CSRП has launched the "WeCare" website in March 2016 to facilitate people in the community to join hands to save life. With a donation made available by Mr Lau Ming-wai,

Chairman of the Commission on Youth, the design and content of the website have been upgraded and a renewed website was launched at the press conference today. The new “WeCare” webpage includes information on warning signs of suicide, communication skills with people having suicidal thoughts, suicide risk factors and protective factors, story sharing and myths about suicide, suicide prevention hotlines, the latest suicide data, and an emotion test.

In conclusion, Professor Paul Yip said suicide is a public health problem. It should be everyone’s responsible to help its prevention. Although the theme of this year focusses on the youth, people from all age groups could have suicide problems, or have someone close to them terminating their lives. Professor Yip encouraged community members to take one step further to “say some kind words of care to those around you, accompany those who have emotional disturbances, to assist them walk out of the shadow to see sunshine in their lives”.

About HKJC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (CSRP), HKU

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

For the press release and presentation slides, please download after 3pm, September 9 from: <http://csrp.hku.hk/wspd2016/>.

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