

WeCare Fund for Student-Initiated Youth Suicide Prevention Project Best Practice Award Presentation Ceremony

WeCare Fund for Student-Initiated Youth Suicide Prevention Project (the project) is the very first cross-institutional student initiated suicide prevention project conducted by The Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (the Centre). The Fund aims to encourage students, with the support of professional advisors, to organise, initiate, and implement mental health related projects at university campuses, and through the projects to nurture positive emotions at campuses and to enhance awareness of mental health issues among youths. Supported by Mr Lau Ming Wai, Chairman of the Commission on Youth, the project had invited applications from students and tertiary institutions from June to August in 2016. Fourteen selected projects at 10 tertiary institutions were funded and completed by December 2016. An award ceremony was held today (March 9). The champion, first runner-up and second runner-up of the Best Practice Award received HK\$50,000, HK\$30,000, and HK\$20,000 respectively for continuation and expansion of their projects.

Champion, First runner-up and Second runner-up of Best Practice Award

The champion was the "Shall we talk" team, a group of youngsters passionate in drama from Hong Kong Baptist University. They expressed their concerns over issues regarding suicide through a self-directed play, written with an aim to inspire audience to reflect on their roles in suicide prevention, as well as deliver the message of treasuring life and emphasise the importance of communication. The whole drama consisted of three stories: the first story explored the causes of suicide and the roles of different stakeholders in society in suicide prevention; the second story highlighted the need to seize the opportunity to care for people around and not to miss their signs for help; the third story encouraged open and honest communication among people and spread hope for the future. The team held three performances at a Black Box Theatre, which were all very well received with over 100 audience attending each time. After each performance, the actors and scriptwriter were engaged in a dialogue with audience to exchange views and feelings. The Centre's review committee agreed that using stories and drama as a medium to raise public awareness and encourage discussion on suicide prevention is more appealing to the youth, in terms of arousing interest and building emotional connection, as compared to traditional methods such as writing column articles or holding exhibitions. The project is therefore worth to be sustained and promoted so as to reach out to more

students at different institutions.

The first runner-up was the 「心晴」 team (literally "shining heart") from the Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK). Their project targeted students living in residence halls. According to the team's observation, students at the university have been busy with academic work, lectures and placements, and since around one-third of the students are staying in residence halls, reaching out to this group should be the most direct and effective way. The team prepared greeting cards, stationeries and souvenirs printed with words of encouragement and contact information for counselling services at the Student Affairs Office, for distribution at dormitories and on university campus. Resident tutors also took the opportunity to chat with students when giving out the greeting cards and small gifts. In addition, a stress relief workshop utilising the expressive arts was held for hall students. It was scheduled in the evening after classes to allow more students to attend. EdUHK students are future teachers in society. Their mental wellbeing as well as their awareness of the importance of it should be of paramount importance, as they will be given the responsibility to take care of the physical and mental health of their students and spread positive messages to them. Therefore, the Centre's review committee was of the view that the project should be made sustainable to benefit more teachers under training.

The second runner-up was the "Game of Tones: You matter, we care" team from Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). The team composed of non-local research postgraduate students at the university. They formed the team out of a sad experience in the past regarding a hall student suicide case, and hope to promote mental health awareness, reduce stigma on mental illness and encourage those in need to seek help. Activities held included "Rap in the dark" rapping workshop, "Kick it out" boxing experience, and progressive muscle relaxation training and meditation. Participants could relieve their emotions and stress through music, exercises, and different relaxation techniques. Post-activity evaluation on participants' mental health knowledge and their help-seeking attitude revealed a general improvement in knowledge and a more positive attitude towards seeking emotional support from professionals. The Centre's review committee expressed in particular appreciation for the non-local student members who have dedicated themselves to care about the mental wellbeing of all students in the university. Their work can fill the gap of existing services to cater also for the need of non-local students to help them adapt to the new environment in Hong Kong and cope with academic stress.

Care and Communications are the keys

The ceremony provided an opportunity for the organiser to express appreciation to the participants to thank them for their support of the WeCare Fund and in promoting proactively suicide prevention. The Centre thanked each participant and institution, in particular staff members of the student affairs offices and professional advisors, for their time and effort.

Mr Lau Ming Wai, sponsor of the project and the guest of honour at the ceremony, was encouraged to see so many students and institutions participated in the event. He expressed his appreciation towards the creativity and strength demonstrated by the youngsters in these projects. They were able to design a mobile app, perform a play, or implement a peer counsellor scheme within a short three months' time. Mr Lau was confident that these projects would bring new ideas to inspire future suicide prevention work.

Professor Paul Yip, Director of the Centre, said the fourteen student-initiated projects had rightly placed an emphasis on the importance of connection and communication among people, through social media or in person to express care. He urged the students to take one step further to continue to show care and be the guardian angels of their peers.

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

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

Photos and more details about the event can be downloaded from <http://csrp.hku.hk/wecare-fund-projects-ceremony/>.

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