

Press release

For immediate release

“Take a Minute, Change a Life”

HKU Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention releases latest figures and suicide prevention recommendations

September 10 marks the annual World Suicide Prevention Day. As a member of the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP), the HKU Hong Kong Jockey Club for Suicide Research and Prevention (CSRP) holds a “Take a Minute, Change a Life” press conference today (September 8 Friday) to release the latest suicide statistics and present the awards to winners of the “Take a Minute, Change a Life” one-minute video competition.

Latest suicide figures

According to figures provided by the Coroner’s Court as of July 31, 2017, CSRP estimated that 12.6 per 100,000 people in Hong Kong died from suicide in 2016. To enable meaningful comparison of suicide rates among different countries or regions, suicide rates are often standardized and adjusted according to the age structure of the world population. After adjustments, the suicide rate in Hong Kong is estimated to be 8.9 per 100,000 people in 2016. For more than a decade since 2003, there has been a continuous downward trend in Hong Kong’s suicide rate.

The incidence of student suicide over the past two years attracted widespread attention. According to figures provided by the Coroner’s Court, there were 69 suicide cases of young people aged 24 or below in 2016. CSRP estimated that the suicide rate of young people aged 15-24 was about 8.9 per 100,000 in 2016, which has increased compared to the rate of 8.4 per 100,000 in 2015. Suicide cases of young people aged 15 or below are rare but have increased slightly from 0.2 per 100,000 in 2015 to 0.5 per 100,000 in 2016. To compare by gender, the suicide rates of both male and female aged 15 or below have shown a slight increase in 2016 compared to 2015. The suicide rate among female aged 15-24 has increased from 4.0 per 100,000 in 2015 to 5.3 per 100,000 in 2016. The suicide rate among male aged 15-24 has slightly decreased from 12.7 per 100,000 in 2015 to 12.5 per 100,000 in 2016.

Professor Yip, the Director of CSRP expressed concern about the increase in suicide cases among the younger age group. Recent cases have seen people as young as ten died from

suicide. Several recent research reports indicate that emotional distress is common among young people. Professor Yip encouraged community members to pay continued attention to the situation of youth suicide by taking the initiative to care and understand young people's feelings, as well as urged parents and teachers to educate and help young people learn how to resolve problems and handle stress in daily life. Professor Yip also reminded members of society to avoid normalizing suicide, to prevent young people from the misconception that suicide is an acceptable method of dealing with problems. Professor Yip added that the suicide rates of other age groups remained higher than that of young people. Therefore, in addition to caring for the problem of youth suicide, he also urged society not to neglect the suicide problems of other groups.

“Take a Minute, Change a Life”

Earlier this year, CSRP held a one-minute video competition with the theme, “Take a Minute, Change a Life”. After a round of public voting on CSRP's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/hkucsrp/>) and panel evaluation, the list of winners is announced at the press conference. The champion, first runner-up and second runner-up are the team from the Police Negotiation Cadre Hong Kong Police Force, as represented by Chief Superintendent Gilbert Wong Kwong-hing, Ng Lai Yee and Christine Yeung respectively. The competition is sponsored by Community Partner Foundation. Ms. Beatrice Mok, founder of the Community Partner Foundation and Executive Committee Member of Suicide Prevention Services, and Professor Yip, Director of CSRP presented the awards to the winners.

The champion team is the Police Negotiation Cadre Hong Kong Police Force. The lead character in their video is a middle-aged man who chose to end his life in the face of economic pressure and inability to face his family. When time rewinds, he discovered there were things and people worth treasuring and there was more than one path in life. Superintendent, Liauw Ka-kei, representative of the champion team shared the inspiration came from the cases they encountered in their work, and through the video, they hoped to encourage people not to give up as there are many ways of solving a problem. As members of the negotiation team, the most critical period they encountered is the very last minute, but if there is someone willing to intervene a minute earlier, there is a chance of reversing the very last minute of the life of the person attempting suicide. He added that suicide prevention is not merely limited to negotiators but everyone can help to prevent suicide.

The first runner-up is Ng Lai Yee. She uses animation in her video to express that companion is a critical factor in helping individuals with suicide tendencies. She hoped to encourage individuals who are contemplating suicide to give themselves a minute more to seek professional help. In addition, she urged everyone not to ignore the warning signals of suicide. She stressed that individuals contemplating suicide do not necessarily want to die but is instead a distressed signal for help, in the hope for someone who can lend a hand and show their concern.

The second runner-up is Christine Yeung. Her video is composed of contrasting darkness and light to symbolize coming out from the dark and walking towards light. She believed that everyone has been through moments of despair, but if we are willing to look beyond the surface, we will discover that darkness comes with the opportunity to transform our lives. She encouraged everyone to view darkness from a different perspective as it is only in accepting and embracing darkness that the other side of darkness, that is light, will be revealed.

Professor Yip concluded, a minute can change a life. He encouraged individuals contemplating suicide to give themselves another minute to seek professional assistance, to walk out of darkness towards light. At the same time, he urged every stakeholders, including police, teachers, social workers, family members to spend a minute more time to listen to and care for individuals experiencing emotional distress, pay heed to their signals for help and together, everyone can prevent suicide.

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. To learn more about the centre, please visit: <http://csrp.hku.hk>

About Community Partner Foundation

Community Partner Foundation is a family philanthropy established in 2012 to promote physical, mental, and spiritual well-being in Hong Kong. The Foundation supports initiatives in the following areas: (i) mental well-being, (ii) church & missionary works, (iii)

education, (iv) youth, and (v) community. By providing financial resources, the Foundation partners with non-profit organisations to carry out projects in response to various concerns. To learn more about the foundation, please visit: <http://cpfhk.org>

This press release, picture, and presentation slides for the press conference can be downloaded from the following website after 4pm, September 8, 2017: <http://csrp.hku.hk/wspd2017/>.

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