

Planning Mental Health Needs of China – A Great Leap Forward

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It is an enormous challenge to plan the mental health needs of China. Professor Wang^[1] and Professor Xie^[2] have outlined broad strategies focusing on clinical services and the shortage of mental health professionals.

The National Mental Health Plan may also need to address urgent mental health issues related to the ageing of the population in China and the rising tide of dementia.^[3] Professor Sartorius commenting on Professor Wang's paper mentioned about dementia as a major contribution to the burden of disability in China.^[4] Besides planning services for the elderly, it is equally important to introduce dementia prevention programmes to stem the tide. The Singapore experience has shown that it is possible to implement such a programme in the community.^[5, 6] In fact, in the Singapore study, all the elderly are Chinese whose forefathers came from southern China. The programme also addresses prevention of depression, hypertension and diabetes mellitus which are risk factors for dementia. Although the programme focuses on dementia, our research shows that the prevalence and incidence of depression are much higher than

dementia.^[7] Depression is a risk factor for suicide in the elderly.

Improving psychiatric education has been emphasized in China lately. In recent years, a team of overseas professors of psychiatry and local Chinese professors have organised Teachers of Psychiatry (TOP) workshops in Beijing, Shanghai and Chengdu.^[8] The TOP workshops are to train psychiatrists to improve clinical service, teaching and research. The focus is on acquiring skills in planning and assessing outcome of clinical services and teaching programmes, and on how to conduct and write research projects.

We look forward to the successful implementation of the National Mental Health Plan and hope to read the outcome results in future publications.

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Conflict of interest statement

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