

Speech by Senior Minister of State for Health, Dr Amy Khor, at the Singapore Association for Mental Health Charity Dinner, 23 September 2016

News Highlights

Dr Francis Yeoh, President of the Singapore Association for Mental Health,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

1. Good evening. I am pleased to join you this evening for the Singapore Association for Mental Health Charity Dinner. The World Health Organisation has defined mental health as a state of wellbeing which enables us to be resilient to the everyday stresses of life, and participate meaningfully and actively in our preferred roles. Mental health issues affect most of us in one way or another. Chances are you know someone who is or has dealt with mental illness and recovery. To be an inclusive society, I believe that a whole-of-community approach in increasing awareness, education and support for persons with mental health illness and their caregivers is the way forward.

Developing emotional safety nets in the community

2. In 2007, the first National Mental Health Blueprint was conceived with the aim of promoting mental wellness through improving access, coordination, and ensuring the quality of mental health services. In 2012, we launched the Community Mental Health Masterplan to complement the initiatives rolled out under the Blueprint, with greater emphasis on engaging community support for persons with mental illness.

3. We are making good progress in building more community-based teams to reach out to a wider population. To date, we have seven Assessment and Shared Care Teams (ASCAT), which are specialist-led multidisciplinary teams that manage patients who have mental health and/or dementia issues in community-based settings such as the polyclinic.

4. We have also set up ten Community Mental Health Intervention Teams (COMITs) comprising allied health professionals from our community partners, such as VWOs like SAMH, to support ASCAT and our 115 General Practitioner (GP) partners in their management of patients with psychiatric conditions. By developing a network for collaboration within the community, our community mental health teams are able to work with government agencies, grassroots leaders, and VWOs to co-create solutions and develop a referral and support system to help residents with mental illness or who are at-risk. As of March this year, we have reached out to 38 constituencies and some 850 residents island-wide under the network, to support person requiring assistance or those at risk of mental illness.

Role of Community Partners & SAMH

5. Our VWO community partners play an important role in establishing and delivering such community based services, especially in the integration of service provision to persons in mental health recovery. I'm heartened to note the efforts of the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) in promoting mental wellbeing in the community and supporting persons in mental health recovery. This is in line with the theme for tonight's charity dinner, 'Integration for Recovery', which highlights the importance of working together to provide support for persons in recovery as well as their family members.

6. Since it was started in 1968, SAMH has come a long way in supporting those affected by mental health issues and their families. For example, SAMH introduced the Certified Peer Support Specialist Programme in 2012 as a platform for persons in recovery from mental health issues to be trained to support their peers in the recovery process, offering hope, encouragement, and guidance. As of 2015, SAMH has trained 80 and certified 49 Peer Support Specialists. SAMH currently employs 9 full-time Peer Support Specialists. In the same year, SAMH also opened Creative MINDSET at Jurong Point Shopping Centre, to promote psychological wellness and mental health recovery through the use of expressive therapies, sports and outdoor activities.

7. SAMH continues to look for new ways to support persons in recovery and meet their needs. It will open the MINDSET Learning Hub in Jurong East next week, which will provide a one stop, end-to-end facility from candidate selection for vocational and social skills training to job placement and gainful employment.

8. The good work of SAMH would not have been possible without the unwavering support of the community. Donors, sponsors, volunteers and corporations, all play an important part in extending a helping hand to those who need help. For example, both the Creative MINDSET and MINDSET Learning Hub were collaborative efforts with MINDSET Care Limited, a registered charity of the Jardine Matheson Group.

Closing

9. As MOH continues to develop programmes to promote mental wellness and outreach services in the community, our collaborations with partners such as SAMH remain vital. To build a more inclusive society, we also need to do our part to help persons in recovery integrate into the society.

10. I wish everyone an enjoyable evening. Thank you.