

Cross Cultural Newsletter

“Physical Illness, Depression and Suicidal Behaviours in Older People: development of a model for assessment”

26th February 2015

Happy New Year!

We have again had a very successful evening yesterday with about 50 of our members attending. The topic was on “Physical Illness, depression and suicidal behaviours in older people”. The speaker was **Dr Gary Cheung**, an eloquent and popular speaker in our meetings.



Dr Cheung first reported on his initial research on older people’s suicidal notes with the intention of finding out the major elements behind their suicides. With this information, he tried to formulate a practical model to help clinicians to determine negative predictive factors that affect the severity of the impact of losses on the elderly and precipitate suicide attempts.

On a more positive note, **Dr Cheung** then discussed with the audience the resilience factors that one can utilise to forestall such behaviours. Finally, he utilised a case study to illustrate the various parts of his model.

Examining suicidal notes of 20 older people who completed suicide, **Dr Cheung** identified a few common reasons



Lantern Festival 2015
Albert Park Auckland

for suicide: viz reduced quality of life; physical ill health; inability to accept not being able to function independently; and fear of going to rest homes.

From these, **Dr Cheung** developed a model linking various components with physical ill health causing reduced functioning thus reducing the quality of life and self-sufficiency. These factors seem all to contribute to suicidal behaviours.

However, not all people with such problems do terminate in suicide. There must be intervening variables that increase the impact of these factors leading to suicide. **Dr Cheung** identified these factors as: **depression and hopelessness**.

Further securitising these two variables, **Dr Cheung came up with three predictive factors that should alert the clinician to the risks viz Depression, poor self-rated health and lack of support.**

Instead of emphasising these negative predictive factors, **Dr Cheung** turned the audience’s attention to factors that would help the older person to develop resilience to the impact of life-draining forces.

These include individual and family factors. Individual factors include personality attributes, optimism, good coping skills but most importantly religion and spirituality. As to family factors, **Dr Cheung** emphasised on quality and quantity of support from family and friends; development of community resources and the utilisation of religious and cultural beliefs relating to the meaning of life.

Having presented his model, **Dr Cheung** used a case study to illustrate the various components of his model. There was much discussion on resources, individual’s outlook to aging and cultural supports. The meeting did not finish until 8.15 pm.

Details of **Dr Cheung’s** presentation were recorded on DVD which would be available in two weeks’ time.

HIGHLIGHT FOR THE NEXT SESSION

By the time you receive this newsletter, the flyer for the next meeting would be out. On the 24th of March (Tuesday), Dr Margaret Agee would be talking to us on **“Grief across the Cultures”**.

Please note

1. Date for future meetings. Once again, we have been successful in reserving the venue on **Tuesdays**.
2. **Attendances:** in the past year, we often have members not turning up for the meeting at the last minute. *In order to assist with catering*, those of you who have enrolled but unable to come, **please let us know , if at all possible, 24 hours in advance.**

Thank you once again for your support.

Yours sincerely,

S Wong
For Cross Culture Interest Group



For a more accurate rendition of the presentation, **please request the DVD** from Diane Evans at dianee@adhb.govt.nz (please send \$2 stamps to help cover costs)

For ADHB staff, previous newsletters and flyers can be viewed on the Intranet – click on this link: http://adhb.intranet/Mental_Health/Resources/CrossCulture.htm