

8. To Empower a Group of Psychiatric Service Users with Community Mental Health Partners in Community Settings

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Introduction:

1. Empowerment is a process that involves different thoughts, thinking and efforts to increasing strength of the individuals and developing confidence in their own capacities.
2. This project enriched a group of psychiatric service users in Hong Kong Island the knowledge, skills and experiences imperative to express themselves with confidence.
3. It also promoted public awareness and support to psychiatric service users

Purpose of the Project:

1. To enrich the skills and experiences of a group of psychiatric service users as self-advocate;
2. To demonstrate the thoughts and feelings of psychiatric service users in art;
3. To arouse public awareness of the needs of people with mental illness at appropriate occasions & events.

Material & Methods:

A core working group of multi-disciplines with six NGOs was set up to co-organize this project from Oct 2008 to Nov 2009. The empowerment composed series of workshops and events ranging from

- ◆ Conducted officiating ceremony with NGOs of mental health in community to drive empowerment;
- ◆ NGOs organized empowerment workshops with photo-taking element for mental clients to advocate their thoughts & feelings on specified themes including (1) Rehabilitation experiences (復康路上), (2) Insight and illness (與病共舞), (3) Daily livings (生活點滴) & (4) Emotions (喜怒哀樂);
- ◆ Set up a selection panel that composed of patient, relatives, NGO staff & PYH staff to screen the best photos;
- ◆ Conducted awarding ceremony and mass promotion; &
- ◆ The selected items were reproduced in term of post-card, poster, stamp and stationery to extend empowerment across community.

Results:

- ◆ About 60 participants joined the officiating ceremony;
- ◆ Over 500 visitors attended the photo exhibitions at Central Library with out-patients as interpretative guides (導賞員);
- ◆ 5-month satellite exhibitions across different venues, i.e. 6 NGOs / MTR / PYNEH.
- ◆ Publish the entry products as post-cards, poster, pamphlets, stamp and stationery.
- ◆ Extensive media exposure included press release

Conclusions & Recommendations:

Psychiatric empowerment is a long way and never-ended process that demands continuous concerted efforts of multi-disciplines and professional practitioners across institution and community. The empowerment approach in way of photo-taking, post card, stationery and stamps were effective to reflect psychiatric clients' needs and convey positive image across community beyond time horizon.