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Institute of Psychiatry, UK

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**Chairmen, Panel on Health Services and Panel on Welfare Services**

22 September 2009

Dear Chairmen,

**Community support services for ex-mentally ill persons**

I am writing on behalf of the Hong Kong College of Mental health Nursing to express our views on the captioned.

Community support for discharged mentally ill persons in Hong Kong is severely insufficient. Thus, relapse and tragic incidents such as homicide and suicide related to mentally ill persons, are not uncommon in Hong Kong. Many discharged mentally ill persons residing in the community with poor quality of life. The majority of them are unemployed and lived under poverty line. Deinstitutionalization of the mental health service must be coupled with adequate post-discharge support by adequately funded community mental health services. We suggest the following:

- ◆ Adopting case management model for all severely mentally ill persons for intensive monitoring, treatment and support.
- ◆ Setting up home care team to provide assessment, care and support to patients and their family at their home environment.
- ◆ Setting up “crisis resolution teams” in each cluster to provide round the clock immediate, intensive, multi-disciplinary community-based treatment for patients with acute severe mental problems. The crisis resolution team would involve in supporting caregivers and patients at home or supporting NGO staff in residential care settings.
- ◆ Setting up nurse-led clinic to ease the workload and cut the waiting time at psychiatric outpatient clinic. The nurse-led clinic would be run by advanced practice mental health nurses. Target groups of nurse-led clinic could be patients with stable mental condition with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, bipolar disorders or major depression; and patients with mild mental health problem and are on waiting list of the psychiatric out patient clinic.

Provision of optimal care for mentally ill persons in the community cannot be realized without inter-agency collaboration and coherence among sectors such as mental health, social care and housing. There is limited collaboration among these sectors at both local and corporate levels. We suggest setting up a central body to oversee the implementation of the mental health policy.

There is a shortage of mental health nurses in Hong Kong. It is a consequence of poor long-term nursing manpower planning. The Hong Kong College of Mental Health Nursing strongly objects to the Hospital Authority's intention to recruit non-professionals to take care of mentally ill persons in the community. There is a paucity of evidence suggesting that these workers could provide safe and cost-effective service. It is a short-sighted solution to nursing manpower shortage. Mentally ill persons deserve to be taken care of by qualified health care professionals. Thus we urged the Government to put in resources immediately to prepare qualified mental health nurses for the Hong Kong.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally Chan' with a horizontal line at the end.

Professor Sally Chan  
President  
Hong Kong College of Mental Health Nursing