

I am a UK-trained, chartered Clinical Psychologist. I completed my doctoral clinical psychology training at the University of London, and I am registered with the health and care professionals council in the UK. I have been working as a clinical psychologist in private practice in Hong Kong for the past 14 months. In this time, I have worked with over 120 clients to treat mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. The overwhelming majority of these clients are from Western backgrounds, originating from the UK, the USA and Australia. I have also done some work alongside charitable initiatives in Hong Kong, which has given me insight into the scale of mental health difficulties here. In my experience, there is a significant prevalence of mental health problems in the expat community here. There is a need for qualified practitioners who have a good understanding of how to assess and treat these difficulties so that appropriate treatment can be offered at an early stage to minimize the disruption in someone's ability to work and function in other areas of their life.

Throughout my training and experiences working as a psychologist both in the UK and in Hong Kong, I have seen that the importance of understanding an individual's background and culture cannot be understated. In order to offer effective psychological treatment for mental health problems, it is essential that practitioners are available who can competently provide culturally sensitive treatment. Given that there is a large expat community in Hong Kong who have a need for this service, it is important that they have access to appropriate professionals who can support them with these difficulties. Many of the clients I have treated have informed me that they have sought a UK-trained professional for their treatment to ensure a good cultural fit. This helps them to feel better understood and more comfortable to share their difficulties.

I am in support of an accredited register for Clinical Psychology. I think it is extremely important that the public are protected from those who are not qualified misrepresenting themselves, particularly given the vulnerable populations that clinical psychologists work with. As a layperson, it can be difficult to distinguish between those who are and are not qualified, and an

accredited register would help people to choose a professional who has the appropriate training and experience to help them.

That being said, I also believe that it is important to ensure that the scheme does not unintentionally exclude suitably qualified practitioners who did not train locally. In addition, the scheme should offer reasonable routes to practice for those who did not train locally, but meet the essential criteria. I understand that it is not an easy task to determine what these criteria should be, and I realize a lot of work has gone into this already. What I would like to propose is that qualified psychologists who did not train locally are involved in the process of drafting the criteria. This could help to ensure that professional standards are maintained and the public is protected without risking drastically reducing access to suitable mental health care for non-local residents.

**Dr. Hannah Sugarman**

**Chartered Clinical Psychologist**