

Steps to create safety net for mentally ill

WE REFER to Mr Kwan Jin Yao's letter ("Do more to make a difference in mental health awareness; Aug 24). We thank Mr Kwan for his interest in mental health care and agree with his view that it is important that our staff are well-trained by various experts both locally and overseas.

The Institute of Mental Health (IMH) regularly invites overseas mental health experts to conduct workshops and seminars for our staff and those from other health-care establishments. Under the Health Manpower Development Programme set up by the Ministry of Health, several staff are sent annually for overseas training and attachments with renowned institutions, and they return to spread their learning to others in IMH.

Our newly opened Centre for Mental Health Education has a multimedia classroom with video conferencing facilities. This allows mental health-care professionals to communicate and interact effectively with local and overseas experts on a regular basis to keep abreast of mental health and medical-related knowledge and skills.

Research is one of IMH's missions and we have been awarded more than \$27 million in grants for research over the last three years. We have collaborated with both local and international institutions to conduct studies to better understand the various mental disorders and trans-

late the findings into better interventions for patients. Since 2008, our research team has published more than 100 papers to share their knowledge.

As the only tertiary psychiatric institution in Singapore, IMH is also committed to educating the public about mental illness and correcting any misconception they might have through talks, roadshows and seminars. As part of our efforts to destigmatise mental illness, IMH conducts hospital tours for students and corporate groups, and works closely with the Health Promotion Board and Silver Ribbon (Singapore) on outreach efforts.

IMH has been engaging various partners to create a safety net in the community for people with mental illness. For example, our Community Mental Health Team conducts networking and training sessions with partners such as community development councils, volunteer welfare organisations and religious institutions. This has better equipped their front-line personnel to help people who may be going through a crisis or suffering from a mental illness. To date, more than 2,500 participants have been trained by the team.

We understand that more can be done and we welcome partners to work with us to further our work in mental health care.

Leong Yew Meng
Chief Executive Officer
Institute of Mental Health