

University: The University of Hong Kong (HKU)
Faculty: Faculty of Social Science Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (CSRP)
Title of case study: Public Health Approach to Suicide Prevention
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>CSRP has developed the most comprehensive surveillance and monitoring system using Coroner's court data, identifying risk and protective factors, testing good practice models and knowledge exchange with and for the community. The work has reduced myth of suicide and improved awareness of mental health in the community. The suicide news reporting has significantly been changed to avoid copycat effect. The suicide rate of Hong Kong has reduced from its historical high 18.8 per 100,000 in 2003 to estimated 12.6 per 100,000 in 2016, which is an impressive 36.9% reduction. All the suicide prevention work are evidence-based and empirically validated.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>CSRP has advocated the use of the public health approach for suicide prevention as it involves a multi-layer intervention. More specifically:</p> <p>i. Leadership and Long-term commitment: CSRP is led by its founding director Prof. Yip, Dr. Frances Law (Associate Director) and Dr. Cheng (Research Assistant Professor). The team has conducted vigorous research to identify risk and protective factors of suicide prevention since its establishment in 2002. We collaborate with various stakeholders and continuously conduct knowledge exchange with and for the community. CSRP is only one of this kind in this region which conducts research, training and public engagement.</p> <p>ii. Evidence-based suicide prevention: We are promoting evidence-based suicide prevention efforts [R4R5R6]. We aim to publish our work in high impact journals and then translate the research findings for and with the community. Our study has made reference to international good practices and guideline. We also aim at publishing our work in many prestigious academic journals, in Lancet, BMJ and British Journal of Psychiatry such that a wider community can be benefited.</p> <p>iii. Community involvement: We believe in community-based suicide prevention program as it is important to work with the local community to increase the feeling of ownership and partnership for the work to sustain in the community. At the same time, we have enhanced the capacity in the community for promoting mental wellbeing work.</p> <p>iv. International and local Collaboration: We have actively participated in many international scientific bodies, World Health Organization (WHO) and International Association of Suicide Prevention (IASP) and local NGOs to benefit from the exchange. Prof. Yip has served as vice president of IASP, a consultant to WHO and many Government for suicide prevention in this region. The Center's proposal on restriction of mean of charcoal sales has been adopted by Taiwanese Government which has led to very encouraging results. We hosted the Asian Suicide Prevention Conference in Hong Kong 2009 and World Suicide Prevention conference in Beijing 2011. We also serve in board of directors in local suicide prevention bodies.</p> <p>iv. Education and Training: Knowing the importance of capacity building and suicide prevention at the upstream level, we have established a long working partnership with the Education Bureau to promote wellbeing in schools. We have also organized mental health trainings to professionals so as to empower them with the best practices guidelines and skills for effective suicide prevention in their positions.</p> <p>v. Media engagement: Media is a double-edged sword. It can be a good tool for suicide prevention but it can also leads to copycat effect due to sensational reporting [R1R2R3]. To promote good practices of reporting suicide news, we published an updated version of the localized guidelines in 2015 based on the WHO guidelines. Our qualitative study revealed that the local media professionals were willing to support suicide prevention but continuous engagement with various levels of media professionals was required in order to change their suicide news reporting practices. Hence, a long-term knowledge exchange project to engage the</p>

local media in 2014 was initiated.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1 Cheng, Q., Chang, S. S., & Yip, P. S. (2012). Opportunities and challenges of online data collection for suicide prevention. *The Lancet* (London, England), 379(9830), e53-e54.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(12\)60856-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(12)60856-3)

R2 Cheng, Q., Fu, K. W., Caine, E., & Yip, P. S. (2014). Why do we report suicides and how can we facilitate suicide prevention efforts? Perspectives of Hong Kong media professionals. *Crisis*, 35(2), 74–81. <https://doi.org/10.1027/0227-5910/a000241>

R3 Cheng, Q., & Yip, P. S. (2012). Suicide news reporting accuracy and stereotyping in Hong Kong. *Journal of affective disorders*, 141(2-3), 270-275.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2012.03.036>

R4 Law, C. K., Yip, P. S. F., Chan, W. S. C., Fu, K.-W., Wong, P. W. C., & Law, Y. W. (2009). Evaluating the effectiveness of barrier installation for preventing railway suicides in Hong Kong. *Journal of affective disorders*, 114(1-3), 254–262

R5 Liu, P. M., Chan, W. S., Law, Y. W., Law, S. C., Fu, K. W., Li, H. S., ... & Yip, P. S. (2009). An integrative suicide prevention program for visitor charcoal burning suicide and suicide pact. *Suicide and life-threatening behavior*, 39(1), 82-90.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1521/suli.2009.39.1.82/full>

R6 Yip, P. S. F., Caine, E., Yousuf, S., Chang, S.-S., Wu, K. C.-C., & Chen, Y.-Y. (2012). Means restriction for suicide prevention. *Lancet* (London, England), 379(9834), 2393–2399.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(12\)60521-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(12)60521-2)

External grant funding (All the grants were awarded to Professor Paul S F Yip, Sponsor: NA)

1. A Study on Suicide Clusters: Hong Kong and Taiwan Experiences

The grant title: General Research Fund (GRF) of the Research Grants Council (RGC)

Period of the grant (with dates): 2010-2014

Amount awarded: HK\$798,648

2. Suicide and Employment

The grant title: GRF of the RGC

Period of the grant (with dates): 2012-2014

Amount awarded: HK\$628,800

3. A Study on Suicide News Reporting Ecology in Hong Kong and Taiwan: Accuracy, Stereotyping and Mutual Causation

The grant title: Public Policy Research

Period of the grant (with dates): 2012-2014

Amount awarded: HK\$300,696

4. Pilot Project on Community-based Intervention to Suicide Clusters

The grant title: Lotteries Fund

Period of the grant (with dates): 2012-2015

Amount awarded: HK\$5,139,000

5. Changing Suicide News Reporting in Hong Kong

The grant title: Knowledge Exchange (KE) Funding

Period of the grant (with dates): 1/7/2014-30/6/2015

Amount awarded: HK\$85,000

6. Connect Vulnerable Youths by Activating their Social Networks

The grant title: Hong Kong Bank Foundation, a charitable trust of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC)

Period of the grant (with dates): 1/7/2017-30/6/2018

Amount awarded: HK\$3,068,941

7. A Quality Thematic Network for Promoting Mental Wellbeing Among School Children

The grant title: Quality Education Fund

Period of the grant (with dates): 1/7/2014-30/6/2017

Amount awarded: HK\$10,000,000

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Suicide Means Restriction

By enlisting the help of all supermarkets to restrict the access of charcoal packs in Tuen Mun, the promising results showed a 53.8% reduction whereas the overall drop of 5.7% in Hong Kong's suicide rate during the same period [S1]. Findings were reported in major local and international newspapers and the British Journal of Psychiatry and the Lancet.

We have also made a persistent effort to advocate for the construction of platform gates across all above ground stations of the MTR since 2007. Our active voice gave pressure to the MTR Corporation to expedite their timeline on constructing platform gates. The former MTR Corporation Chief Executive Jay Walder promised to speed up instalment of platform gates from 2018 to 2017 on the Ma On Shan line [S2].

The success of our community based suicide prevention project in Cheung Chau project led to opportunities to extend to other community-based projects in the Eastern and North Districts which have been funded by the Government (HK\$5 million). CSRP's program and research are instrumental to create a sustainable impact on reducing the suicide rate in these areas.

E-engagements

In order to reach out to people who hesitate to seek help or those who want to learn more about suicide prevention over the Internet, CSRP has created several e-platforms: MindMap (www.MindMap.hk), Little Prince is Depressed (LPD) (www.depression.edu.hk) and the CSRP website (www.hku.hk/csrp), to engage them and deliver high quality information and research findings. The WeCare website (<https://wecare.csrp.hku.hk/>) supported by a private donor (Azare foundation and MW Lau Fund) has been built to provide online support for youth in crisis and information for stakeholders to access. With substantial support from the Quality Education Fund (HK\$10 million), CSRP developed an online e-learning program, "Professor Gooley and The Flame of Mind" (www.gooley.edu.hk), to provide an engaging mental health-learning experience to teenagers and their parents. These online and interactive efforts not only are held in high regard locally by the public [S3], with LPD winning the top ten awards in the Meritorious Websites Contest for six years in a row (2006-2011) [S4], but have also received accolades from mental health professionals abroad. The e-engagement has also attracted continuous funding from HKJC in the next five years with the budget (HK\$70 million).

Media

Our work on suicide prevention through media has several impacts. First, with our engagement of restricting the spread of helium suicide in 2014, many newspaper editors accepted our recommendation to remove contents that described the method of suicide involving gas and to prevent detailed descriptions of it in subsequent news reporting [S5 S6]. We examine news reporting suicide cases on a day-to-day basis and proactively approach newspaper offices when any inappropriate or sensational reporting was noticed. We also respond to media enquiry on a regular basis. Due to our engagement, titles, photos and content of reports were less sensational and with less personal information of the deceased. The intensity of media reporting on helium suicide cases has reduced sharply in comparing to charcoal burning [S7].

Following media practice changes, intensity of student suicide incidents dropped in 2016. Our effort has also gained recognition from the HKSAR government and the international. Prof. Yip was appointed as the chairman of the Committee on Prevention of Student Suicides in 2016, and its report has become the blueprint for suicide prevention for students [S8].

Social Media

We worked with Facebook, Google and Baidu to provide helpline messages to people

who search suicide-related information using the two search engines [S9ab]. Our collaboration with Hong Kong YouTuber Auman in producing the suicide prevention short film “The Last Day” in 2017 received positive feedbacks from the public. We are also preparing a research paper based this collaboration, documenting the impact and how to engage YouTubers successfully for suicide prevention. We are now working with several other Hong Kong YouTubers with the support of HSBC to promote mental wellbeing and suicide prevention in social media [S10].

Funding and Awards

We have been receiving continuous funding for suicide prevention throughout the years. It is acknowledgement of our work for the community. In 2017, Prof. Yip was awarded a medal of Honour by The HKSAR Government for his dedicated public and community service, particularly his contributions to the prevention of student suicide. The IASP has awarded the most prestigious Stengel Award in suicide prevention to Prof. Yip’s contribution in 2012. Prof. Yip and Dr. Cheng have been awarded the Faculty Knowledge Exchange award in 2012 and 2017 respectively.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- S1** Yip, P. S., Law, C. K., Fu, K. W., Law, Y. W., Wong, P. W., & Xu, Y. (2010). Restricting the means of suicide by charcoal burning. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 196(3), 241-242. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.109.065185>
- S2** 星島日報 A05 港聞《馬鐵線裝幕門 提前2017完成》2012-03-20
- S3** Statement of Support from the Committee on Home-school Cooperation is available for corroboration purpose.
- S4** Awards received:
- Asia Wall Street Journal and the Singapore Economic Development Board
Silver Asian Innovation Award 2005
 - Hong Kong SAR Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority
Meritorious Websites Contest Award 2006-2011
(<http://www.merit.gov.hk/eng/info/result.php>)
 - International Association of Suicide Prevention (IASP) 2011
The Lee Award for Good Suicide Prevention Measures / Practices for means restriction
- S5** Email conversation with the Chief Editor of Apple Daily Hong Kong showing appreciation, ‘I am glad to meet you all yesterday. Thanks a lot to share with us your concerns which are valid. We will take your views in serious considerations when coming across the same kind of news in the future. Please feel free to tell us if you think what we did may cause problem. It is always not our commission but omission. If you have an article to be published in our Forum, please send directly to me.’
- S6** Cheung, K. H. (2014, September 22). 沙膽虹手記：最緊要溝通. *Apple Daily*. Retrieved from <http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/news/art/20140922/18874748>
- S7** Yip, P. S., Cheng, Q., Chang, S. S., Lee, E. S. T., Lai, C. S. C., Chen, F., ... & Cheung, K. W. R. (2017). A Public Health Approach in Responding to the Spread of Helium Suicide in Hong Kong. *Crisis*. 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1027/0227-5910/a000449>
- S8** Committee on Prevention of Student Suicides. (2016). Final Report. Retrieved from http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/student-parents/crisis-management/about-crisis-management/CPSS_final_report_en.pdf
- S9ab** Email conversations with the representatives of the Google Inc and Baidu, giving advice for them to provide helpline messages for suicide-related searches.
- S10** Email conversation with the representative of the Google Inc. regarding the collaborative project on suicide prevention with Hong Kong YouTubers