JC JoyAge – Holistic Support Project for Elderly Mental Wellness

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14 May 2024
31.0% of the Hong Kong population are 60 years or above (2023-end Census Data), meaning 1 in every 3 Hong Kong people is an older adult. This proportion is projected to become over 40.0% in the coming years.

Aside from other physical illnesses, over 10.0% of them experience clinical depressive symptoms — i.e., over 1 in every 10 people.

With population ageing, this will induce a substantial cost and burden not only on the affected individuals but also society, healthcare, and economy.
Summary of the Impact

To address the service gap:

We have trained 6300+ “Mental Wellness Ambassadors” and 900+ “Peer Supporters” to equip them with the clinical competence to support JoyAge’s outreach and engagement activities. 130 social workers have undergone intensive clinical training to deliver evidence-based interventions in district elderly and mental health centres.

Since 2016, we have successfully reached 100,000+ older adults and developed an evidence-based intervention, providing preventative interventions to 8,500+ of those at risk or with subclinical depressive symptoms.

Over 90% of them showed improved outcomes.
Every dollar invested in JoyAge = $2.14HKD saved from the healthcare system.

JoyAge has expanded from its 4 pilot districts to the entire territory in 2022 with nearly 50 non-governmental organisation (NGO) centres and 3 more district health centres since 2024 – i.e., more than 1 centre in every district of Hong Kong is providing JoyAge’s services.
JC JoyAge – An Introduction

Initiated and funded by:

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust

Host institution:

Department of Social Work and Social Administration
The University of Hong Kong

Partners:

Project introduction:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNZD3VnNNmw&t=6s&ab_channel=HKUJCJoyAge
All interventions are evidence-based (behavioural activation and cognitive-behavioural therapy-based), designed by clinical psychologists and senior social workers of the team, delivered by trained social workers in district-based elderly centres (DECCs) or Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness (ICCMWs) with Peer Supporters, with adaptations to the older adult population.

The choice of intervention provided is based on each participants’ levels of risk, symptom severity, and intervention response.
Underpinning Research
Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of JoyAge:
Findings from the 2016–2019 Pilot Phase

JoyAge is among the first to adopt a stepped care model for older adults with subclinical depressive symptoms in the community setting [R1].

Before JoyAge, there had also been little research on the experiences and outcomes among young-olds as Peer Supporters, particularly in the Asian context.

We showed that:

1. The JoyAge stepped care model is **significantly more effective** in reducing depressive symptoms compared to matched controls [R2,3]

2. The JoyAge stepped care model is **cost-effective** in gaining additional depression-free days and quality-adjusted life years compared to usual care: every dollar invested in JoyAge contributes to $17HKD saved in the healthcare system [R4,5,6]

3. Peer Supporters feel an **improved sense of meaning and hope**, as well as **a strong sense of “peer-ness” and companionship**, in their process of supporting others in their mental health recovery [R7]

Since 2016, we have published 19 peer-reviewed articles (one recently accepted) with 20 academic conference papers or posters presented to document and share insights gained from the JoyAge experience. Further details are documented on our JoyAge Research Website: https://research.jcjoyage.hk/research/publications.
References to Research


Knowledge to be Exchanged

1. The HKU team has developed an effective stepped-care intervention for older people living with mild-to-moderate depressive symptoms.
2. Through our community-based participatory research, our team has also developed an effective community-based mental health literacy promotion strategy.

Knowledge exchange was achieved through an iterative process by a multi-disciplinary team of clinical psychologists and senior social workers with psychiatric advice and researchers, via meetings and engagements with users and stakeholders, public engagements, and both collaboration and sharing with local and international government bodies and organisations.
Impacts Achieved: **JoyAge Services Implemented across all 18 Districts**

Between 2016–2019 (research phase): donation of **over HK$87 million** from The Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) Charities Trust, enabling the HKU team to develop and test the JoyAge service model.

- **Since 2020**, HKJC donated nearly **HK$600 million** to expand the JoyAge stepped-care intervention across all 18 districts, involving **31 DECCs and 18 ICCMWs from 18 NGOs**, while further expanding to the primary care setting in **3 district health centres**
- **Since 2016**, **8500+** older adults with depressive symptoms have received our stepped-care intervention, with **94% showing significant improvement**
Impacts Achieved: Older Adults as Direct Beneficiaries
(as of 10 May 2024)

Including the pilot phase, JoyAge has provided direct intervention to **8,494 older adults with depressive symptoms**, with 94% showing improvement.

Significant reductions in depressive symptoms (PHQ-9) were found both in **DECCs** (mean = 7.16 to 2.79) and **ICCMWs** (mean = 12.40 to 4.27).

Significant reductions in anxiety and loneliness symptoms were also seen.
Impacts Achieved: **Ambassadors and Peer Supporters**

(as of 10 May 2024)

**Ambassador Training**
(15-hour course on JoyAge services + Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults Certificate Course + 6-hour practicum)

- **Trained 6331 young-olds** promoting mental wellness across all districts in Hong Kong

**Peer Supporter Training**
(80+ hours of theory + practicum certificate course after ambassador training)

- **Trained 917 young-olds** who conducted **100,000+ outreach visits and engagement sessions** for JoyAge participants
Invited interview with TVB
快樂長門人 - Oct 2021

Invited interview on Peer Supporters’ stories in Ming Pao Weekly (both online and printed) - Apr 2024
Engagement: Professional Development and Capacity Building

Intensive Training
(53-hour theoretical training + 200-hour intervention skills training with practicum + 3-hour exit examination)

- Trained 130 project social workers from partner NGOs

Professional Training Workshops
- Conducted 74 workshops with 6,600+ attendance from the social services and welfare sectors

Training and Intervention Manual Development
- Online training platform (didactic learning & quiz)
- 3 intervention manuals (CBT for mood, CBT for insomnia, acceptance and commitment therapy)
- Practice wisdom & practical guides (mindfulness-based CBT, suicide prevention)
Engagement Process: Dissemination to the General Public

Public and community events
- 860+ community events across all 18 districts
- 5 family fun days with older adults of the families
- 2 public talks covering topics of self-care under emergencies and bereavement

Multimedia
- 2 websites (Service + Research), with 317,412 views
- A smartphone application, exceeding 3,500 downloads
- Facebook page, with more than 6,000 followers and created over 1,400,000 impressions
- YouTube channel, with 208 videos published

Local mass media (add up to 6.7 million viewership)
- 25 newspaper and magazine coverage
- 3 local press conferences
- 4 international symposiums (another to be held in July 2024)

Publications
- Suicide prevention toolkit for older adults
- Case and Peer Supporter Storybooks
- Mental health self-help toolkit under Pandemic
- 2 newsletters
Innovative Bottom-Up Approach in Engaging Stakeholders and Knowledge Dissemination

Theory of Change Workshops with Stakeholders

Aside from having strong evidence in support of the core service mode, we are aware of the importance of **co-creation** and **co-design** in the process of designing a new service model for the future of Hong Kong.

To address this, we held 3 **Theory of Change workshops** in 2022 with 33 representatives from 22 organisations as the first step toward building a desirable primary mental health care system for older adults in Hong Kong.

### Stakeholders involved:

**Policymakers:** HKSAR Government officials

**Funder:** representatives from the Hong Kong Jockey Club

**Service providers:** physicians, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, nurses, occupational therapists, directors of NGOs

**Academics:** professors from tertiary institutions

**Service users**, including caregivers

### Outcome:

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Theory of Change Workshops – Dissemination to the Wider Public

Hong Kong Economic Times

June 2022

Dec 2023
Engagement Process with the General Public
Rapid Responses during the COVID-19 Pandemic

We developed a **warm call protocol used by social workers and volunteers** to monitor over 8,000 older adults’ mental health between Feb and Aug 2020 and between Apr and June 2022.

We also trained over 800 mental health ambassadors trained via Zoom as “e-buddies” to support their peers.

Based on behavioural activation principles, we developed a **14-day activity online workbook** to encourage older adults to engage in enjoyable activities and maintain their mental health. It has reached 1300 downloads.
Innovative Peer-Designed and Peer-Led Engagements

「養生樂圖」Wellness Map
https://linktr.ee/wellnessmap

78 ambassadors formed 20 groups to identify “wellness spots” across all territories in Hong Kong from May to Sep 2023 to produce a "Wellness Map" involving 298 spots for older adults to enhance their social life and improve meaningful engagements.
Evidence of Impact: Local Recognition

Since 2016, we have been invited to share the work of JoyAge through 4 radio interviews and 8 TV programmes, with 53 newspaper and magazine coverages.

Given the JoyAge experience and his expertise in aged care, Prof Lum was appointed as a member of the Chief Executive Policy Unit of the HKSAR Government and the Research Council of Our Hong Kong Foundation.

Prof Lum invited by Our Hong Kong Foundation to give specialist advice on mental health services for older adults and policy directions, Dec 2022

Prof Lum featured in the HKU Bulletin in May 2020 (Cover Story) and the Faculty’s Socientiest 2021

Invited sharing in local media
NowTV + Viu TV 杏林在線 – 長者有話兒 Oct 2021
RTHK 鏗鏘集 – 面對情緒 May 2022
NowTV + Viu TV 杏林在線 – 人老心不老 Jun 2022

JoyAge team invited by the Hong Kong Council of Social share our IT system as an exemplary case to facilitate NGOs’ service management for the social services sector, May 2024

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Evidence of Impact: International Recognition

Prof Lum was further invited to give expert advice on **protecting older adults during the pandemic to the UK Parliament** in May 2020

[Image: Professor Lum giving a talk]

[Video Link: https://parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/5fbbebb5-b2e1-4339-aaeb-f4a53aec56de]

...as well as give specialist advice to government officials of the Chilean, Toronto, and Australian Governments, respectively, in 2020.

Prof Lum was also appointed by the **World Health Organization to join the Global Network of Long-Term Care (see Report)** and was invited to join the **Lancet Commission on Long-Term Care for Older Persons**

Of **500+** funded projects by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust through 2021–23, **JoyAge was selected as 1 of the only 2 projects** invited to the Prince Mahidol Award Conference 2023 to share our experiences with the global community.

Participants at the conference included consultants of the leading organisations (incl. World Health Organization, the World Bank), as well as local government officials, including Dr Lam Ching-choi (Chairman of the ACMH) and Dr. Donald Li Kwok-tung (Chairman of the Elderly Commission, Hong Kong SAR Government).