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## **The Hong Kong College of Family Physicians recognizes the important role of family doctors in providing easily accessible, timely and whole-person care to their patients with emotional disturbances or mental health problems in the community**

As the first point of contact for medical care, family doctors are best positioned to identify individuals in the community who are at increased risk of mental health problems, offer appropriate interventions, and collaborate with other health professionals to ensure patients receive the needed services. Through provision of continuing interpersonal care to their patients, together with their understanding of their patients' medical histories, family doctors are uniquely positioned to detect early signs of mental health problems.

Family doctors are trained in recognizing and treating common mental health problems and can provide initial assessments, prescribe medications, and make referrals to specialized mental health services when necessary. Furthermore, by addressing the physical, psychological, and social needs of patients, they play a key role in preventing mental health problems from deterioration.

To enhance the role of family doctors in managing mental health problems in the community, we urge policymakers to invest resources in mental health care and prioritise the role of family doctors in providing mental health care to their communities. This will enable family doctors to better identify and manage mental health problems, as well as facilitate collaboration with other health professionals and community-based services.

We also encourage the public to seek help from their family doctors as soon as possible if they are experiencing any psychological distress and/or disturbances. Early intervention and support are essential in promoting recovery and preventing mental health problems from deteriorating.

In summary, family doctors play a critical role in the timely management of mental health problems in the community. By strengthening primary care services and fostering collaboration between healthcare professionals, we can work together to address mental



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health crisis and ensure that everyone has access to the care and support they need.

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