



Plenary II

Promote Mental Health and Wellness at All Times



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Professor Cindy L. K. Lam MH, JP, is Danny D. B. Ho Professor in Family Medicine and Head of the Department of Family Medicine and Primary Care, the University of Hong Kong. She is Chief Censor of the Hong Kong College of Family Physicians. In her capacity as the Asia Pacific Vice-Chair of the WONCA Working Party for Mental Health (WWPMH), she actively promotes the integration of mental health into primary care in the region. She is a co-author of the WWPMH Guidance on Core Competence in Primary Mental Health Care and Medically Unexplained Symptoms. She was Master Faculty of the WONCA-California Academy of Family Physicians-Healthcare Performance Consulting Asia Pacific Train-the-Trainer Courses on Improving Our Care for Patients with Depression and Anxiety. Her main research interests are primary mental health care, health-related quality of life measurement and primary care services quality and outcome evaluation. She has over 340 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters.

Mental health problems, particularly depression, are becoming one of the most common non-communicable diseases in the 21st Century. It is one of the top three causes of morbidity in the world in both developed and developing regions. Research has shown that less than 30% of the people suffering from depression are receiving the needed treatment. Self, social and professional stigma often deters patients from seeking help for their mental illnesses. Many people in distress present to primary care with a variety of physical symptoms, which provide an opportunity for early detection and interventions of their mental health problems.

The WHO and WONCA have recognized primary care as the key to mental health for all and advocated the integration of mental health into primary care. The WWPMH Guidance on Core Competence in Primary Mental Health Care has identified six competencies that family doctors must have. The first is a positive attitude towards the value of mental health; the second is effective communication with patients in distress; the third is the ability to diagnose mental health problems early; the fourth is the skills of applying the appropriate non-drug and drug treatments to the management of mental health problems; the fifth is the capability to collaborate with other professional and community services to meet the needs of the patient; and the sixth is reflective practice to maintain one's own well-being. This presentation will illustrate with a real patient example on how the family doctor applies these core competencies to achieve the goal of promoting mental health and wellness at all times.