

Chapter 11

From Strength to Strength:

An interview with Dr. Judy Hui, Senior Clinical Psychologist

Introduction of Dr. Judy Hui



Dr. Judy Hui is currently the Senior Clinical Psychologist of the Correctional Services Department (CSD). She obtained her Master of Science (Clinical Psychology) and Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology from the University of Surrey, UK. She joined the CSD in 1991 and since 2010 has been the Head of Psychological Services Section 1 (PSS1) responsible for planning and managing the psychological services for adult persons-in-custody (PICs). She has wholeheartedly been contributing to the rehabilitation of offenders for the past 30 years. She has spearheaded the development of specialised treatment programmes for different groups of adult offenders and promoted the adoption of evidence-based practice. She has also organised numerous professional seminars and international meetings to promote multidisciplinary collaboration and crime prevention. During this interview, Dr. Hui shared her vision of the future development of psychological services for adult PICs.

Regenerate Your Mind, Rebuild Your Life

CSD's Psychological Services was first set up in 1976 and over the following decades its services have kept progressing to meet the ever-changing needs of PICs. As the head of PSS1, Dr. Hui stressed the importance of keeping abreast of societal changes in providing quality services. She is pleased that the psychological services delivered by her team have its mission to "Regenerate Your Mind, Rebuild Your Life". By helping PICs reconstruct their outlook and actualise their inner strengths, they can rebuild a positive and responsible life.

Dr. Hui is keen to introduce the latest theoretical models as guiding principles for service planning and delivery. While she takes the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model as the core guiding principle for the services, she has proactively incorporated new theoretical models of offender rehabilitation such as a strength-based model and desistance model into the services based on the latest scientific research.

Modern technology vs human interaction

With technology as a major driving force of modern society, CSD has been embracing modern technology in its service planning and management. With the increased popularity of virtual reality (VR) technology and a worldwide trend to integrate VR into offender rehabilitation, CSD first developed its VR psychological assessment and treatment tool in 2017 and developed a second version with much wider applicability in 2021.

The Psyber Space, the first digitalised psychological programme for adult PICs, was implemented in 2021. Dr. Hui said, "We have changed pens and paper to tablets gradually when conducting therapeutic exercises and psychological tests. I am happy to learn that PICs have responded positively to this digitalised programme, as interactive media technology is increasingly used to engage them in a more lively treatment programme." She further emphasised that:

"Technology may help engage PICs and better accommodate their mode of learning. However, it cannot replace valuable human interaction which is the core in psychological treatment."



While Dr. Hui pointed out that more projects applying technology are in the pipeline, she stressed that the Department would continue to invest resources in professional training with a view to providing high quality psychological therapy through interpersonal interaction.

Services driven by research

Dr. Hui believes quality psychological services should be driven by the latest research. Many renowned international experts have pointed out that gender specificity, family involvement and through care in the community after release are key directions of modern offender rehabilitation. As a leading professional team, the PSS1 spares no effort in keeping its services abreast of the latest research findings.

PSY GYM and LIFE GYM. The professional team under the PSS1 has pioneered the development of two gender-specific psychological treatment programmes: PSY GYM and LIFE GYM, for adult female and male PICs respectively. Numerous gender-specific treatment elements, such as making use of art for female PICs and therapeutic sports for male PICs, have been incorporated in the programme design. Dr. Hui is happy to note the impressive results of both treatment programmes which point to the future direction of adopting a gender-specific perspective in the overall planning of offender rehabilitation, taking into the needs of different genders.

Family-based Psychological Services. Based on the latest research (Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2017; De Claire & Dixon 2017; Garofalo, 2020) and after the successful development of an innovative model of 'whole family' support for PICs, named the Invisible Walls Wales (IWW) project based in South Wales, UK (Clancy and Maguire, 2017), CSD is developing family based psychological treatment at Tong Fuk Correctional Institution for PICs. Dr. Hui told us that her professional team provided a family-friendly environment for PICs and their families to rebuild their relationship through different therapeutic activities. She added that through enhancing family support, the motivation of PICs to change would be strengthened. "This new service will certainly open a new psychological treatment direction with increasing levels of family involvement in treatment," Dr. Hui said.

Psychological Services in the Community. The latest research clearly indicates the importance of extending professional support to the community after PICs are released (Bonta et al., 2017; Bourgon et al., 2020). "PICs face a lot of problems after release. My colleagues and I are looking forward to reaching out to them after release, and help them face their challenges in the community when they are under supervision. We will help them apply various psychological skills and consolidate positive changes when they return to the community," said Dr. Hui. She is glad to see that four new Multi-purpose Family and Rehabilitation Service Centres will be set up in different districts soon, to provide suitable venues for the development of psychological services in the community and facilitate more multidisciplinary collaboration.

Building a research culture

Being a professional leader, Dr. Hui recognises the importance of building a research culture in the Department and encouraging her colleagues to conduct scientific research on offending behaviours. These include continuing research projects on the risk assessment of different offender groups, gender-specific issues, treatment evaluations, etc. She has initiated collaboration with local and overseas academics, creating a synergy for jointly conducting quality research and encouraging publication of research papers in international journals for fruitful professional exchanges.

"Research is an important foundation of effective correctional services. I am very pleased to see that broadening and deepening of research capacity has become one of the key focuses in the departmental strategic plan," Dr. Hui said.

In future, she will lead her professional team to expand their focus. The hope is to further increase their contribution to the department by providing evidence-based and diverse professional support to the correctional services.

Facing new challenges

Helping PICs admitted to correctional institutions because of their participation in riots or committing other violent transgressions in recent years has become a new challenge for the clinical team. “Their profiles and rehabilitation needs are indeed different from other PICs. We have promptly designed a voluntary psychological programme for those in need, named as “Psychological Pathway for Change”. Through addressing their psychological and mental health problems, we hope to help them make a positive reintegration into society and rebuild a good relationship with their families after release,” Dr. Hui said.

Together we start a new chapter

Dr. Hui concluded that CSD’s psychological services have developed into an internationally recognised professional service. Having served in the Department for 30 years, she regarded the solid support from the Department and the dedicated professional psychological team were key contributors to its success. She stressed that the professional team members were of high calibre and important assets of CSD’s psychological services. It was imperative to have a team dedicated to continuously enhancing their professional knowledge and skills for a shared mission to help PICs. Furthermore, Dr. Hui reiterated:



Looking towards the future, Dr. Hui hopes to broaden the contribution of the professional team within correctional services by better utilizing their professional knowledge. She remarked:



With many plans to be put into action, Dr. Hui stands ready to lead the team to overcome different new challenges, so that they can continue to provide psychological services of high professional standard, and start a new chapter with different disciplines in Hong Kong.

References

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