

MEDIA RELEASE – For immediate distribution

Mental health crisis and emergencies: Australia and China work to tackle shared and complex challenges

Asia Australia Mental Health launches new patient-centred collaboration in Shenzhen to address rising incidents of clinical and community violence

(Shenzhen, China, 24 June 2016) Mental health crises and emergencies can lead to distressing outcomes for individuals and communities. Now, the University of Melbourne and China are working together to tackle these universal and complex challenges, with the launch of an innovative training initiative by Asia Australia Mental Health (AAMH), in Shenzhen, southeast China, today.

Currently, over 100 million people suffer from mental illness in China alone, with less than 15 per cent receiving any treatment at all. Once a quiet fishing village, Shenzhen has transformed into a modern metropolis of over thirteen million people. With rapid urbanisation, and a largely internal migrant population who often lack family support networks, Shenzhen currently lacks capacity to respond appropriately to mental health emergencies when they arise.

As a result of the long-standing relationships established by AAMH with the Shenzhen's Kangning Hospital, Hospital Authority and the City Government, Shenzhen has entrusted AAMH to build capacity in this critical area.

The first-of-its kind three day program will equip Chinese healthcare, community sector, government, police and media professionals with an in-depth understanding of mental health crises and emergencies, along with the practical skills to predict, respond to and manage crises when they arise. The program showcases the patient-centred approach Australia (and Melbourne in particular) has adopted, with a view to working with partners in Shenzhen to tailor these models to a Chinese context.

Head of Psychiatry at the University of Melbourne, Professor Ian Everall, says there is a strong alignment between the Chinese government's national focus on creating more people-centred cities, and patient-centred solutions developed in Melbourne. Together with Asialink, Professor Everall's Department is a key partner in the AAMH initiative.

"As a forward-looking and people-centred city, Shenzhen has recognised that the problem is too big to be solved by one group alone. They are seeking an inclusive approach, bringing together clinicians and mental health workers with first responders.

"We are immensely proud that the University of Melbourne's AAMH consortium is helping deliver mental health services to hundreds of millions of people, using our expertise and experience to directly benefit communities in China," Professor Everall says.

Professor Everall will lead a multidisciplinary team of Melbourne-based community mental health professionals, psychiatrists, emergency department clinicians, and Victoria Police officers, to deliver the training.

Co-Director of AAMH, Professor Chee Ng, says the project builds on AAMH's broader collaboration and long-term trusted relationships with Chinese partners over many years.

"The only way violence can be reduced is to plan for it, by considering the very different needs of individuals involved and by working together across health and community sectors and across borders," Professor Ng says.

Asia Australia Mental Health (AAMH) is a partnership between the University of Melbourne's Department of Psychiatry and Asialink. AAMH partners with leading local and international organizations for improved mental health in the Asia Pacific.

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Background

About the program

The training program aims to support the development of well-informed and effective mental health crisis management teams for the City of Shenzhen. Specifically it will:

- build awareness of the spectrum of causes and predictors of mental health crises
- build knowledge of best practice principles of care, risk assessment and treatment decisions for psychiatric crises and emergencies used in a key Victorian mental health service
- assist planning and decision-making for a range of mental health crisis situations in Shenzhen
- identify procedures to assess and manage risk to patient and others in clinical and community settings.

About the trainers

A multi-disciplinary team of Melbourne-based experts will conduct the training in Shenzhen:

- **Professor Ian Everall** is the Cato Chair of Psychiatry and Head of the Department of Psychiatry, The University of Melbourne
- **Professor Chee Ng** is Healthscope Professor in the Department of Psychiatry, The University of Melbourne and Director of the Professorial Psychiatry Unit of The Melbourne Clinic
- **Julia Fraser** is an Executive team member of Asialink and founding Co-Director of AAMH, directing a wide range of Asia focused initiatives within Australia and in the Asia Pacific region
- **Yue Li** is the China Projects Manager, for AAMH in 2002. She is responsible for AAMH's China program
- **Dr Cathy Daniel** works for Consultation Liaison Psychiatry at The Royal Melbourne Hospital assisting staff to manage behavioural disturbance in acute health
- **Sergeant Anthony (Tony) Richardson** is a uniform Sergeant attached to the Melbourne North Police Station. his current role includes hospital liaison on mental health
- **Terry Runciman** holds a Masters of Clinical Psychology and has been with Victoria's North Western Mental Health for 12 years

About AAMH's partnerships in China

AAMH has become the key international partner in China's national mental health reform program, which involves 250 cities, 1800 districts, and covers a population of 940 million.

Asialink and the University of Melbourne's Department of Psychiatry have worked in China on mental health collaboration since 2003. This includes working with the national government on its 686 program, provincial-level bodies such as the Guangdong Institute of Mental Health, and now with city level bodies, such as the Shenzhen City Government, its Hospital Authority and Kangning Hospital.

In addition to the current project in Shenzhen, in April 2016, AAMH signed agreements with two of China's leading medical colleges to work towards innovative models for collaboration in training the next generation of Chinese psychiatrists and mental health experts. The first MoU, signed with Peking Union Medical College, heralds a new collaboration to create a University of Melbourne Masters degree in Mental Health Sciences. The degree will be tailored to a Chinese audience including government officials, general practitioners, allied health workers and non-government organisations. It is the University's first award-bearing degree delivered entirely in Chinese. The second MoU, signed with the PKU Institute of Mental Health and PKU Healthcare, will see the development of a national training program for mental health professionals who want to upgrade their qualifications to become clinical psychiatrists.