Editorial for Special Issue “Application of the Addiction Syndrome Model”

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Published online: 7 December 2018

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This special issue of The International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction, *Application of the Addiction Syndrome Model*, contains a collection of nine original research papers presented at the First Asia Pacific Conference of Addiction Professionals (APCAP). The first APCAP is organized by the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, Integrated Centre on Addiction Prevention and Treatment (ICAPT), and co-organized by the Department of Applied Social Sciences, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The conference served as a platform of showcasing state-of-the-art research studies on addiction treatment models, prevention programs, addiction prevalence and epidemiology, and clinical case studies locally and internationally. The theme of the first APCAP was “Application of the Syndrome Model.”

The traditional approach to addiction views different expressions of addiction as distinct disorders (e.g., substance use disorder, alcohol use disorder, gambling disorder), even though addictive behaviors often coexist with each other and co-occur with common mental health problems. The Syndrome Model of Addiction (Shaffer et al. 2004, 2012a, b) views addiction as a syndrome that shares a common etiological vulnerabilities of neurobiological and psychosocial elements, with this etiology applicable to both behavioral and substance use disorders. Although the temporal progression might be distinct, manifestations and sequelae are shared across expressions of addiction.

In this special issue, we have accepted nine original research papers by the special issue guest editors Prof. Shek Tan-lei, Daniel, and Dr. Chan Mei-lo, Elda. In “Using the Syndrome Model of addiction: a preliminary consideration of psychological states and traits,” authors presented findings with various common psychological vulnerabilities shared among both the behavioral expression and chemical expression groups, and possible unique psychological

The editorship of this special issue is equally shared between the first editor and second editor.

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characteristics associated with each expression of addiction. These findings provide support for conceptualizing addiction as a syndrome. In “Survey on drug use among people living with HIV in Hong Kong,” the authors reported that substance abuse is prevalent among people living with HIV in Hong Kong. Younger age, MSM, history of STIs, and smoking were independently associated with substance use. This study revealed the complexity of addiction, and the level of sensitivity as well as comprehensive assessment required when working with this population. Treatment has never been easy for many. In “Treatment fears – A barrier to young psychotropic substance abusers in drug rehabilitation,” authors reported early treatment fears and anticipated discharge fears for substance abusers undergoing residential drug treatment that provided valuable information for service practitioners to formulate intervention strategies in residential care.

A couple of case study and practice research are included in this special issue. The paper entitled “Chinese adults with high-functioning autism (HFA), addiction, excessive sexual activity, internet gaming addiction, pathological gambling” discussed two clinical cases of Chinese adults with both HFA and addictive behaviors, and suggested careful attention on assessment, conceptualization, and intervention for this occurrence disorders. The “Service needs of pregnant substance abusers seeking residential drug treatment in Hong Kong: A Practice-based Research” paper reveals that substance abuse has significant impacts on the fetus development and later child rearing. Pregnant substance abusers usually come from complicated social backgrounds with complex problems over drug abuse. The findings imply the need of designing, implementing, and advocating an integrative service model to meet the multiple needs of pregnant substance abusers.

Two evaluation studies are included in this special issue. The “Evaluation of ‘Colorful Life’: A Multi-Addiction Expressive Arts Intervention Program for Adolescents of Addicted Parents and Parents with Addiction” paper reported an evaluation study on a multi-addiction expressive arts intervention program for adolescents of addicted parents and parents with addiction in Hong Kong. Authors in the paper entitled “A Study of effectiveness of short-term residential treatment for clients with diverse addictive behaviours” reported the effectiveness of adopting multi-modeling at a short-term residential treatment programs for people experiencing multi-expression of addiction. As compared to the control participants, the experimental participants yielded significant increase in motivation to build a healthy life, willingness to disclose distress, and self-efficacy over time, and their perceived interference by addiction significantly reduced over time. These results suggest that the residential treatment camp is a potentially promising complement to treatment of multi-expression of addiction.

Last but not least, both the “Collective play versus excessive use: An insight into family-focused design intervention for mobile phone overuse” and the “Imagining consequences of excessive smartphone use via a character-based mobile application” papers discussed how innovative measures including use of collective play and interactive mobile application can be designed and incorporated into treatment of addiction.

This special issue is rich in content, deep in connotation. The papers included also have theoretical and practical implications. By doing this work, we earnestly hope that addictive behavior can be viewed in a holistic lens. We want to thank all the authors for contributing their wisdoms and practice experiences. We must also thank the reviewers who devoted their time and effort into the revision and selection of these papers. They are Samson Tse, Alun Jackson, Michael Yiu, Ricky Tung, William Chui, Stephanie Merkouris, Margaret Wong, Anna Hui, and Yu Lu. We hope you will enjoy reading this special issue.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

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