L3 What Ails the Populace: The Singapore Mental Health Study

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The Singapore Mental Health Study which is funded by the Singapore Millennium Foundation and Ministry of Health is a 3-year population-based epidemiological study of the Singapore population. The study—which uses cutting edge epidemiological techniques and methodologies—sets out to establish high quality baseline information on the prevalence of certain key mental disorders in the adult Singaporean population, the associated factors of these disorders, the level of unmet needs in terms of the treatment gap and delay in seeking help, and estimates the social and economic impact of these disorders.

A total of 6616 Singapore residents (including Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents) aged 18 years and above living in Singapore were interviewed in depth in a household survey. The main phase of the study was launched on 1 December 2009. The first household was contacted on 2 December 2009 and the last interview was completed on 5 December 2010. The response rate was 75.8%.

The findings of the study show that mental disorders are not uncommon in Singapore — the most prevalent is Major Depressive Disorder which is also more prevalent among females, those who are divorced/separated/widowed, and those of Indian ethnicity. There is a high comorbidity of mental disorders and chronic physical conditions. A majority of those with mental disorders have not sought professional help and when they do, it was after a long delay.

This presentation discusses some of the key findings of the Singapore Mental Health Study within the context of some of the limitations of such a large study, as well their implications with reference to Singapore's first ever National Mental Health Policy and Blueprint. The relevance and importance of such a population-based survey to informed and rational policy making will be highlighted.

L4 Improving Survival Outcomes for Gastric Cancer

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Gastric cancer is the fifth commonest cancer in men in Singapore and frequently, a fatal disease. The Singapore Gastric Cancer Consortium (SGCC) is a translational research group comprising clinicians and scientists working with the aim of improving survival outcomes. The twin strategies to improve survival comprise early detection by screening and improving treatment by using genomic profiling to select appropriate therapy.

Early detection is a principal strategy to improve survival outcomes. In current practice, such early diagnosis is only achievable by endoscopic screening, as there is presently no reliable blood marker. A pre-disease high-risk cohort (Gastric Cancer Epidemiology Programme, GCEP cohort) comprising 3000 subjects (age >50 years) was recruited to explore the feasibility and yield of endoscopic screening in our population. Ten patients were detected with early cancers in the first 1600 patient-years of surveillance, marking the first time that screen-detected gastric cancer has been diagnosed in Singapore. Biomarker discovery using proteomics and other strategies have yielded candidate biomarkers. The ultimate aim is to develop a cost-effective screening strategy for the Singapore population.

To improve treatment results, our strategy is to apply genomic profiling to select appropriate therapy. Gene expression profiling of a panel of gastric cancer cell lines identified the "GEMINI" signature, which was predictive of survival as well as drug response in our patient cohort. This is now being prospectively tested in clinical trials.

We believe that population survival rates for gastric cancer can be improved by a combination of preventive and therapeutic strategies.