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Engaging the Chinese Community to Reduce Stigma and Support the Recovery and Empowerment of Consumers and Carers: Processes and Initial Outcomes

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A community managed mental health service, delivering services in Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales, and the ACT, with expertise in CALD sensitive practice

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Mental health and the Chinese community

Stigma and misunderstanding of mental illness within the Chinese community is common, creating significant barriers for some people living with a mental illness in seeking treatment.

These attitudes discourage some families from talking about illness and some families can be extremely reluctant to seek any form of mental health support for themselves or their loved ones.

K. F. Chung and M. C. Wong (2004), in Experience of stigma among Chinese mental health patients in Hong Kong concluded that:

“The most frequently reported coping method was maintaining secrecy about the illness”.

Wellways context

In our 2009-2015 strategic plan, increasing the use and accessibility of our services to CALD populations was identified as a key priority.

Working with the Chinese community, Wellways has previously developed and delivered translated Chinese language versions of our peer-led *Wellways Family Education programs*.

When bidding to deliver Partners in Recovery, Wellways prioritised the engagement of CALD communities.

Evaluation was included from the start, engaging Monash University.

Stage 1: Exploration study

Research/Evaluation Question:

How is mental illness perceived within the Chinese community within our catchment?

Using the bilingual worker model, Wellways initially employed 1 Chinese Support Facilitator in the PIR program, increasing later to 5.

Our Chinese worker suggested that we should do more to actively encourage participation of Chinese carers and consumers in the PIR program.

A series of consultations with the Chinese community followed.

Stage 2: Chinese community consultations

Research/Evaluation Question:

What are the most innovative strategies and appropriate activities, specifically targeted to engage the Chinese community?

We consulted with:

- Chinese service providers
- Chinese consumers and carers
- Chinese community leaders
- Chinese media