Preface

Introduction to the Special Issues: Cultural Psychiatry in China
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In spite of the fact that the population of China is very huge, almost occupying more than one fifth of the world's population, there is very little literature relating to cultural psychiatry that is available to colleagues in and outside of China. There are many reasons for this. There has been a delay in the development of modern psychiatry in China, particularly relating to cultural psychiatry. This is due to numerous reasons: frequent wars, unstable social conditions, and political factors. Anything related to “culture” is considered a sensitive subject in mainland China, especially during the Cultural Revolution era that took place several decades ago. Language is another barrier that prevents scientific reports being written and published in English for international readers. Yet, there is a strong academic interest among scholars around the world who want to know how culture has impacted the mind, behavior, mental health, psychiatric problems, and practice of therapy for people in China.

In September 2006, organized by the World Association of Cultural Psychiatry, the First World Congress of Cultural Psychiatry took place in Beijing, China. It was a great opportunity for Chinese colleagues and international scholars around the world to get together to exchange knowledge and experiences relating to cultural psychiatry. Many Chinese colleagues made their presentations, which provided the chance for scholars around the world to have an opportunity to take a glance at cultural psychiatry issues in China.

Based on an invitation from the Editor-in-Chief of the World Cultural Psychiatry Research Review (WCPRR), we are delighted to work on the special issue with two parts (in Vol. 3, N.4 and Vol. 4, N.1 respectively) under the heading of “Cultural Psychiatry in China.” These issues mostly includes selected summary articles that have been presented by Chinese colleagues during the First Congress and have been included in the Congress Proceeding. Several articles have been added which were presented at the Cultural Psychiatry Meeting held in Kamakura, Japan in April 2007, and some were written by guest editors who were invited to write on special topics.

The topics of the articles included in these issues broadly covers subjects relating to cultural psychiatry – from basic issues to clinical matters. In the first part, after the publication of the review of development of cultural psychiatry in China (Zhao & Miao), and after the publication of cultural psychiatry-related articles in Chinese Mental Health Journal for the past decades (Gao &
Cong), basic issues relating to culture personality (Cheung) and psychology of shame (Qian) were presented. This was followed by the study of issues relating family and single child (Wang et al. & Chen), child behavior problems (Lin & Wang), and marital problems (Yang). Social and cultural aspects of clinical issues were dealt with regarding disaster intervention (Lu), culture and forensic psychiatry (Xie), and funeral practices for suicide patients in rural areas (Xiao et al.).

In the second part, unique information was reported about the epidemiological investigation of minority ethnic groups in China, namely, the people of Tiebet (Wei et al.) and people of Jino Nationality (Le et al.).

There are considerable amounts of articles focusing on the issues of culture and psychotherapy. The topic of Confucian thought and its implications for Chinese in therapy (Yan) was echoed by the subject of psychotherapy as revealed in Chinese traditional medicine (Tian). Researchers also elaborated on two unique topics; applying Chinese proverbs used in daily life in psychotherapy (Cong), and hypnosis in psychotherapy for Chinese patients (Huang). This was followed by an overview of clinical experiences and cultural insight on how to apply and modify psychoanalytically-oriented therapy for Chinese patients (Xiao), which is a very import subject from a cultural perspective. Associated with this, a proposal was mentioned for relationship-oriented psychotherapy for Chinese, a theoretical departure from object-focused therapy (Wen). Finally, the theoretical foundations of indigenously developed cognitive psychotherapy, based on Daoistic philosophy, was explained by its originator (Young), and its clinical application and usefulness was reported (Zhu).

Thus, within these special issues, the wide spectrum of cultural psychiatry, from basic psychology, to cultural issues, psychopathology, and psychotherapy, are included to illustrate the various needs cultural psychiatry in China. Following the publication of Chinese culture and mental health (Tseng & Wu, 1985), and Chinese society and mental health (Lin et al. 1995) published in English two decades and one decade ago respectively, this special issue will serve as an updated resource regarding Chinese culture, mental health and psychiatry for international colleagues. We are grateful to all the authors who took part in this work, and appreciate the Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Goffredo Bartocci’s kind suggestion and invitation for us to work on these special issues of WCPR Review.

REFERENCES

Lin TY, Tseng WS, Yeh EK. Chinese society and mental health. Hong Kong, Oxford University Press, 1995