

# HEAL

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## President's address

– Empowering caregivers

Hope. Acceptance. Love. Resident writer, Yohanna Abdullah, shares in this issue that these are the three prerequisites that both caregivers and People with Mental Health Issues (PMHIs) should have in the journey towards recovery.

Hope is important because without hope that a person can recover, it is easy to just give up in the arduous journey of life. Hope is the impetus that energises both caregivers and PMHIs.

Acceptance is important because without acceptance one is stuck in the earlier phases of bereavement like anger and denial. Having a mental illness results in both caregivers and PMHIs having to go through a bereavement process. The earlier and the more complete the process of acceptance of this life challenge, the earlier one can move on and head towards recovery.

Love is important because people who love each other for Allah's sake and not for any personal gain will show extraordinary selflessness and be able to give unconditional love. Each PMHI needs unconditional love that allows him or her to recover well.

Alhamdulillah, we had a very successful seminar for our caregivers in November at the AMP auditorium in Pasir Ris. We were especially lucky to have both our patron Mdm Halimah giving a powerful speech on the importance of

## About Club HEAL

Club HEAL is a charity that aims to assist and empower people with mental health issues to regain confidence in themselves and others in their journey towards community reintegration. It also aims to eradicate the stigma surrounding persons with mental health issues thereby breaking unnecessary barriers to their recovery process. Services provided by Club HEAL include psychiatric rehabilitative services, home visits, public education, caregiver support groups and volunteer training and many more.

supporting our noble heroes, the caregivers; and our special guest from Kuala Lumpur, Dr Nor Hamidah Salleh, sharing with them useful pointers. Our caregivers hunger for accurate advice on how to solve their current issues, and this seminar provided them with an invaluable opportunity to seek personalised advice. Also present were champion caregiver Mr Raymond Anthony Fernando and our own Yohanna Abdullah speaking from experience and from their hearts.

The recovery of persons with mental health issues hinges largely upon the wise actions and support of their caregivers. The nature of mental illness is such that sufferers in the initial phase will have significant difficulty even recognising that they are unwell, and this is especially so for those who experience psychosis.

Stresses typically experienced by caregivers include persistent anxiety, emotional distress, family conflicts, feelings of helplessness and self-blame, social withdrawal, and poor emotional support.

Raymond Fernando has the formula of the 3 P's – Patience, Perseverance and Prayer – which resonates well with the Muslim method of coping with stress – “Oh ye who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer: for God is with those who patiently persevere.” – Qur'an 2:153.

Yohanna advocates maintaining hope that there is a good chance of recovery, accepting the challenges faced in illness so that one can move towards recovery and nurturing a climate of unconditional love at home to ensure that the patient recovers well.

Both Raymond and Yohanna exemplify what we in Club HEAL would like our beneficiaries to become – they have gone through much hardship and have triumphed, and have gone on to spread the good news that there is hope of recovery for each and every one who believes that he or she will recover.

We in Club HEAL intend to continue empowering our caregivers through our programmes for caregivers so that they are allowed to share and learn from one another, and to know that they are not alone.

All is well in Club HEAL.

Hail our heroes – the caregivers! ■