

NACC NEWSLETTER

Jan – April 2013

Editorial

Since our last update, a number of things have happened. We had our 2nd National Annual Conference where about 400 people participated. The main speaker Rev Dr Tan Siang Yang took the plenary sessions on the integration of counseling psychology with pastoral care. Coupled with his warm personality, the participants were mesmerized by his deep insights. The participants also benefited from the other speakers in the plenary and workshop sessions, who spoke on couple therapy, family development and other counseling-related topics.

We bade farewell to Franklin Morais and Janice Tan who have stepped down from the board in view of their busy schedules. We welcome Shamini Olivo and Dr Vincent Wong, both of whom were participants during last year's conference and responded to the "Macedonian call" given during the annual conference.

We also warmly welcome the 109 new members who have joined us in 2012. As subscription is due on Jan 1 each year, we thought it good to remind that your partnership with us will help us gather greater momentum in the building of a credible and sizable mass of Christian counselors for eventual representation to parties within and without the church.

We are pleased to announce that the Lord has provided us with suitable premises for our office. Besides using it for our office operations, the place could also be used to conduct our bimonthly training workshops. We will also be opening a resource corner for our members to use.

Introducing our new office



The NACC office is located on the first floor of this building. Look out for this very distinct landmark and you won't get lost!

We are also grateful to the Lord for providing us with a suitable person to head the organisation full-time. Patrick Cheng is no stranger to Christian ministries, having served the Lord full-time for more than three decades. With him coming on full-time, we will be able to take the training workshops outside the Klang Valley, to other parts of the country.

In line with our vision to build more credibility in Christian counseling for effective ministry and representation, we will be streamlining our training for membership criteria. More details will be given in due course.

Once again, we seek your partnership, prayer, and participation.

Yours in Christ,

Dr. Edmund Ng
President

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF

NACC
Malaysia

CHRISTIAN COUNSELLORS

Council of Reference 2013-2014

Dr John Court
Dr Eric Scalise
Dr Evelyn Biles
Dr T. Maniam
Dr Goh Chee Leong
Dr Johnben Loy
Ps Dr Daniel Ho
Ps Dr Chew Weng Chee

NACC Committee 2013-2014

President:
Dr. Edmund Ng

Vice-President:

Secretary:
Patrick Cheng

Assist. Secretary:

Treasurer:
Lucy Tan

Committee Members:
Dr Vincent Wong
Sharmini Olivo
Rev. Nancy Quay

National Association of Christian Counsellors Malaysia

2-2B, Block K, Jalan PJU1/3A,
Sunway Mas Commercial Centre, 47301 Petaling Jaya
Tel/Fax: 03-7803-5088 Email: Enquiries@nacc-malaysia.org
Website: www.nacc-malaysia.org

Introducing our Executive Director



Patrick underwent theological training at Malaysia Bible Seminary and received graduate-level training in both secular and Christian counselling approaches. In addition to his Masters in Pastoral Counseling, he has also completed the coursework for his second Master in Counseling at a local university and will be applying for his licentiate.

He conducts workshops on basic counseling skills, marriage and family issues. He serves on the board of Focus on the Family (Malaysia) and lecture part-time at a local university on counseling psychology. Besides serving as a lay leader in his church, he preaches for other churches on various topics. Before joining NACC full-time, he worked in the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) for over 17 years and had been tasked with administration, church relations, and leadership development.

With his theological and counselling training, we believe he would be able to serve our NACC members and the churches well. He will be working with church leaders to conduct basic counselling skills, family development and smart parenting courses to help Christians better understand human needs at different stages of life so that they would be more effective in ministering to people within and outside their church.

Report on Workshop on Understanding and Coping with Depression (Nov 2012)

Dr Vincent Wong, an experienced psychiatrist by profession and a committed Christian at heart, gave an interesting talk to help the participants understand that depression is a disease that can affect anyone, including Christians. He also gave some biological, cognitive, and spiritual guidelines for participants to help those who are suffering from this mental malaise get out of its crutches. The workshop helped the participants to recognize the symptoms of depression as early detection would help individuals better manage this mental malaise to aid speedy recovery.



Next workshop: Conceptualizing Mental Health Issues from Multiple Perspectives

The way we think about a subject will almost directly influence our choice of actions. This workshop aims to facilitate a deeper appreciation of the complexity of mental health issues, by examining them from five broad perspectives, namely, the biological, psychological, family, social and spiritual. The workshop will focus on how to integrate these five dimensions meaningfully towards a more holistic approach in improving the mental health of those under our care.



Dr. Ng Wai Sheng has a *Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology (ISPP-Chicago)* and has served in various settings including academia, social services, inpatient and outpatient psychiatric settings. She serves as a board member of Malaysian Care and worships at the Seremban Methodist Church.

Date: 30 March 2013 (Sat)
Time: 9.00 am - 12.00 noon
Venue: NACC Malaysia

Cost: RM25 for NACC members, RM50 for non-members
Registration options:

1. Cheque made payable to "National Asso of Christian Counsellors" and send to our office address at 2-2B, Block K, Jln PJU1/3A, Sunway Mas Commercial Centre, 47301, Petaling Jaya.
2. Direct banking to Maybank: 512231348681 and fax bank-in slip to our office at 03-78035088
3. Online transfer at www.nacc-malaysia.org

Resources

1. Resource Corner

We have a collection of some excellent counseling resources (DVDs and manuals) given to us by the American Association of Christian Counselors. Topics include addiction and recovery, strengthening couple relationship and God's Way of Caring for Others. These are for viewing and referencing within the Resource Corner of our office only.

2. NACC Forum 2012

In conjunction with our 2nd annual counselling conference last year, we published a journal, comprising various articles on Christian counselling. While it was given out free to all the conferees, NACC members are also entitled to this useful resource. Drop us a line if you have not received your copy.

Preliminary Notice for 3rd Annual National Counseling Conference

Dates: 14-15 June 2013 (Fri – Sat)

Speakers:

Dr Ng Kok Mun - Associate Professor at University of North Carolina, USA

Dr Leonard Yong - Adjunct Professor of University of South Australia

Dr T. Maniam – Professor and Senior Consulting Psychiatrist at University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Elder of Emmanuel EFC

Dr Goh Chee Leong, Vice President of HELP University

Others: To be confirmed

Do block out the dates. Further details will be given in due course.

The “God” Factor in Mental Health

Tim Clinton, Ed.D., LPC, LMFT, BCPC

People everywhere are obsessed with God, however they define Him. An undeniable spiritual longing spans every culture and ethnicity. Consider this: Every year, three million Muslims visit Mecca to fulfill their call to a once-in-a-lifetime Hajj. ⁱ Every year, hundreds of millions of Hindus trek to the Ganges River and surrounding temples to have their sins purified. ⁱⁱ And every year, the Vatican City is the most visited place on the planet per capita. ⁱⁱⁱ Over two billion people worldwide follow the teachings of the Bible, with only 2% of the world’s population considering themselves atheists. ^{iv} The faith factor matters! God is “going rogue” in counseling research and practice. Clients demand it, professionals are seeing it, and research substantiates it.

Client Demands

While religion may be on the “outs,” it’s hard to deny this fascination with spirituality, this universal “God thirst.” As a result, it’s not surprising, then, that when “people of faith” are considering mental health services, they want God in the equation. Many still seek out their pastor; priest, or rabbi first for counseling. In fact, two thirds of Americans want their faith addressed in mental healthcare. ^v

We are also learning that therapeutic alignment in counseling is critical. Matching counselors of faith with clients of faith is significant to positive therapeutic outcomes. Clients who are deeply committed to their faith appear to prefer clinicians who can incorporate prayer, Scripture and other faith-based resources. ^{vi}

Professional Growth

Lest we forget, it wasn’t long ago, if you talked about God or religion in mental health circles, you were not taken seriously as a professional. Sigmund Freud viewed the idea of God as irrational and irrelevant, writing, “Religion is an illusion and it derives its strength from the fact that it falls in with our instinctual desires.” ^{vii}

Albert Ellis, the founder of Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy and another early leader in the field, concluded, “[T]he sane and effective psychotherapist should not...go along with patients’ religious orientation...for this is equivalent to trying to help them live successfully with their emotional illness.” ^{viii}

In stark contrast, spirituality is now recognized as the fifth force in mental healthcare, and mental health organizations are seeing the need for training in this area. ^{ix}

Counselor Training

Every mental health organization is now making provisions for spirituality in the counseling context. Some are even calling for graduate counseling training programs to conduct sensitivity training for working with religious clients.

One hundred out of the approximately 150 medical schools in the U.S. offer some variation of spirituality-in-medicine coursework, and 75 of those 100 require their students to take at least one course on the topic. ^x

The American Counseling Association and American Psychological Association each have a division that brings together professionals who recognize the significance of religion, both in the lives of their clients and in the discipline of psychology. ^{xi}

Why? Because faith matters in what we do and it’s impossible to divorce counseling and psychology from its moral and philosophical roots.

Research Findings

Increasingly, outcome studies continue to document the role of faith in mental health. ^{xii} Psychiatrist and researcher, Harold Koenig, reviewed 1,000 research studies (from 1878 to 1999) on the relationship between religious belief, health and mental health, and the great majority showed a positive correlation. ^{xiii} Koenig’s 2011 text, *Spirituality and Health Research*, shows the same positive relationship that true faith enhances physical and mental health. And the number of studies conducted over the past 10 years - 2,000! ^{xiv}

Moreover, advances and applications in neurobiological research offer insights into the rich interplay between the mind, brain and relationships that help us understand the impact of spirituality.^{xv} The concept of neuroplasticity (the ability of the brain to change structurally and in its functionality) asserts that the brain can be altered and new neurocircuitry developed through relational experience. The notion that relationship qualities can have powerful neurobiological effects fits well with a Christian worldview, demonstrating that humans are designed for intimate relationships with God and one another.

What We Need

As we look to the future of Christian counseling, a world of opportunity beckons. We need leaders who have a deep affection for God's Word and will challenge us to think theologically. As noted psychologist, professor and pioneering leader, Arch Hart lamented, "We have run ahead of our theological foundations"^{xvi}

We need researchers who will pioneer biblically-empirically-supported treatments. We need education to train the next generation in the helping sciences. We need to bring this process alive, one-on-one, in sacred and settings across our country and around the globe. We need ethicists, who understand important issues such as client self-determination and informed consent, and who defend the use of spiritual interventions in mental healthcare. We need spiritual formation theologians who will constantly push and pull us into deeper intimacy with Christ. We need leaders – Joshuas and Calebs who are willing to take a stand and take the high country, to lead us through the challenges of integrating faith in our practice. Clearly, we need those who develop "eyes for the world"

The future of Christian counseling lies with those who will press into God and unashamedly stand for the truth. Will you be among them?

Dr Tim Clinton is the president of the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC). Article taken from "Christian Counseling Connection", Vol 18 ~ Issue 2. Reprinted with permission. For more information on AACC, visit www.AACC.net

Membership with NACC

As Christians are trained in Christian counselling, they will be able to help others more effectively through their counselling knowledge and skills. Here are some other benefits in joining NACC Malaysia:

1. Receipt of regular educational articles in Christian Counselling
2. Personal usage of our new resource centre with the latest training materials
3. Entitlement to the NACC Christian Counselling Forum magazine
4. Receipt of our quarterly NACC Newsletter
5. 50% discount to our Annual Conferences, bimonthly seminars and training seminars outside the Klang Valley
6. Earn Contact Hours and get exemptions for certain tertiary-level counselling courses
7. Updates and dialogues on the latest developments in Christian Counselling around the world.

ⁱ B.A. Robinson, "Religions of the World: Number of Adherents; Growth Rates", Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerances, <http://www.religioustolerance.org/worldrel.htm>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Sally M. Hage, "A Closer Look at Spirituality in psychology Training Programs, *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 37.3 (2006):303-310

^{vi} Nathaniel Wade, Everett Worthington, and David Vogel, "Effectiveness of Religiously Tailored Interventions in Christian Therapy." *Psychotherapy Research*, 17 (2007): 91-105

^{vii} Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Letters on Psychoanalysis, A Philosophy of Life, Lecture 35*, 1933 (New York: Vintage new Ed Edition, 2001)

^{viii} Albert Allis, *The Case Against Religion: A Psychotherapist's View and the Case Against Religiosity* (Austin, TX: American Atheist Press, 1980)

^{ix} Harold Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality and Medicine: Research Findings and Implications for Clinical Practice." *Southern Medical Journal*, 97 (2004):1194-1200

^x Bonnie Booth, "Profession: More Schools Teaching Spirituality in Medicine." *American Medical Association*" (2008) retrieved from <http://www.ama-assn.org/amednews/2008/03/10/prsc0310.htm>

^{xi} American Counseling Association, (2009), Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling, retrieved from <http://www.aserevic.org/>; Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality-APA Div 36, (2011), "Division 36 seeks a Broad Dialogue on Religions in all the areas of the Social Sciences," retrieved from <http://www.division36.org/>

^{xii} Harold Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality and Medicine: Research Findings and Implications for Clinical Practice," *Southern Medical Journal*, 97 (2004): 1194-1200

^{xiii} Harold Koenig, Michael McCullough, and David Larson, *Handbook of Religion and Health* (New York City: Oxford UP, 2001)

^{xiv} Harold Koenig, Dana King, and Verna Carson, *Handbook of Religion and Health*, 2nd Edition (New York City: Oxford UP, 2012)

^{xv} Tim Clinton and Gary Sibcy (2011, at press). "Christian Counseling, Interpersonal Neurobiology, and the Future." *Journal of Psychology and Theology*.

^{xvi} Hart, A. "Has Self-esteem Lost its Way?" *Christian Counseling Today*, 9(1) (2001):8.