

US- China collaboration on mental health service and research addressed during the APA annual meeting (5/4/2021)

During the American Psychiatric Association (APA) annual meeting this year (May 1-3, 2021), Dr. Xiaoduo Fan and top leaders from the mental health field in China delivered an invited general session entitled “US-China collaboration to advance mental health service and research in China”. The speakers included: Yifeng Xu, MD, MS, professor of psychiatry, president of Shanghai Mental Health Center/Shanghai Jiaotong University, and director of WHO/Shanghai Collaborating Center for Research and Training in Mental Health; Xiaoping Wang, MD, PhD, professor of psychiatry at the Second XiangYa Hospital/Central South University, director of the National Clinical Research Center for Mental Disorders, and vice president of the Chinese Society of Psychiatry; Min Zhao, MD, PhD, professor of psychiatry, vice president of Shanghai Mental Health Center, and vice president of Chinese Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment Association; Jie Li, MD, PhD, professor of psychiatry, president of Tianjin Mental Health Center/Tianjin Medical University. The session was moderated by Dr. Fan, professor of psychiatry at University of Massachusetts Medical School and director of the UMass Chinese Mental Health Program.

Along with the rapid economic development, the burden of mental illness and related behavior problems have been growing in China. China has at least 100 million people suffering from mental illness including more than 16 million diagnosed with serious mental illness (SMI). Mental illness has become the biggest burden on the Chinese health system. During this session, top leaders from the mental health field in China discussed various important topics. Dr. Xu provided an overview about the current status and challenges of the mental health system in China. Dr. Xu also shared his assessment about the “stress test” performance of the national mental health system during the current COVID-19 pandemic. After near 30 years of debate, the first mental health law in China was approved in 2013. Dr. Wang discussed the implementation of mental health law and ethical issues in mental health service delivery in China. Next, Dr. Li introduced psychosocial interventions and community support for the mentally ill population especially for those individuals with SMI in the context of Chinese culture and the government structure in China. In addition, Dr. Zhao introduced the rapid development of mental health research enterprise in China. Specific examples were presented to illustrate the effort in bridging basic neuroscience research and translational, clinical and population research in China. Then Dr. Fan reflected on his personal journey being involved in US-China collaboration in the past decade. Towards the end of the session, the speakers shared their insight about potential US-China collaboration opportunities to advance mental health service and research in China in the next decade.

