

Research Grants Council uploads lectures on community health to website for public viewing

The following is issued on behalf of the University Grants Committee:

The Research Grants Council (RGC) presented its first set of public lectures this year under the theme "Community Health" on September 12 (Saturday) at the Hong Kong Central Library. The speakers were Associate Professor of the School of Nursing of the University of Hong Kong Dr Kelvin Wang and Professor of the Department of Psychology of the Chinese University of Hong Kong Dr Agnes Chan. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lectures, delivered in Cantonese, were recorded on video and are now available on the RGC website for public viewing (www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/about/events/lectures/20200912.html).

Dr Wang's lecture, entitled "COVID-19 Pandemic Online Health Information", described how online health information has affected public perception and behaviour in Hong Kong. Dr Wang pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic has not only created a public health crisis but also impinged on online health information and mental health. He emphasised the importance of acquiring real-time, accurate and reliable information to facilitate preventive practices and reduce fear during the pandemic, as pervasive misinformation and disinformation about COVID-19 on social networking sites and online forums could undermine the collective effort on anti-pandemic measures. Information overload and the digital divide were also sources of concern.

Professor Chan introduced her research findings in the lecture "Lifestyle Medicine for Physical, Mental and Brain Health". Lifestyle medicine is an evidence-based practice which helps individuals acquire and sustain the right habits to improve their health. Major components include a whole-food, plant-based diet, regular physical activity, stress management, positive thinking, social engagement and avoidance of risky substances. While scientific research in Western countries has found lifestyle medicine to have positive therapeutic effects on physical illnesses like diabetes, coronary heart disease, hypertension, high cholesterol and pain, Professor Chan's research team has focused on its effect on cognitive disorders over the past 10 years and developed a form of lifestyle medicine based upon Chinese Chan concepts. Her research findings have suggested that this form of lifestyle medicine has positive effects on the cognitive functions of children with autism and older adults with memory problems.

The public lectures of the RGC aim at arousing public interest in local research developments. Since 2009, the RGC has invited numerous leading scholars to speak at these lectures.