



加拿大華人情緒健康協會  
**Chinese Mental Wellness Association of Canada**  
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February 16, 2009

Hi All:

I would like to ask for your support to keep open the doors of Chinese Mental Wellness Association of Canada (CMWAC). As you know, CMWAC has been active in the Richmond community for more than a decade, and has done much to promote mental wellness among Chinese and English speaking citizens. It offers support, guidance and education for patients and families: this work needs to continue.

I understand that in these difficult times, budgets must remain balanced and demands must be prioritized. I think that mental health support groups are an important service that deserves ongoing funding. This is particularly true for a city such as Richmond with its high proportion of ethnic Chinese residents (39% in 2001) and immigrants (54% in 2001). A study of Chinese immigrants in British Columbia shows that their use of outpatient mental health resources was only 10-20% of non-immigrants. Their rate of psychiatric hospitalizations was between 8-15% of non-immigrants.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding the unlikely possibility that somehow this population is blessed with remarkable mental health, the more likely explanations are that there are cultural and language barriers to their getting help. Stigma and poor English skills can be formidable obstacles. This is where the CMWAC makes such a difference, for it directly addresses these issues through its support groups, educational events and advocacy.

Now, of concern for your administration is the question of duplication of services. However, the question implies that we are somehow saturating the population with help, when this is hardly the case, particularly in Richmond. A review of immigration showed 152, 184 Chinese immigrants came to BC between 1985 and 2000, with Richmond having the highest concentration of Chinese immigrants. However, their rate of mental health visits to GPs was lowest in Richmond compared to all other Health Service Delivery Areas (20-29% lower than neighbouring Vancouver), and their rate of visits to psychiatrists was 17-60% lower than for Vancouver.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, there is a need for mental health education and

**advocacy that is not being met; and we could only wish for a significant increase in community services. The problem isn't that there might be duplication: the problem is that there isn't enough duplication.**

**But alas, a look at the services being offered shows little even in the way of duplication.**

**As per their website, SUCCESS offers a Chinese help-line that helps in "accessing social service", with "informational and emotional support". Unlike the CMWAC warm-line, it is not focussed on mental health issues. It also doesn't provide ongoing advocacy. As for counselling, it is offered with fees generally "ranging from \$25-\$110/hour". CMWAC offers counselling by donation. Finally, there is no mention of public lectures on mental health.**

**The CMHA promotes mental health more specifically, and according to e-mail communication, for the month of February, there will be one meeting in Richmond of the Cantonese support group that will offer information on autism, a childhood onset disorder. The rest of their education and support activities will be offered in Vancouver and Burnaby.**

**CHIMO offers a crisis line and referral in Richmond, but not ongoing advocacy nor peer support.**

**The MDA offers peer support throughout BC, but does not currently run any groups in Richmond.**

**Contrast the above with the many peer support activities, drop-in atmosphere and consumer volunteer opportunities of CMWAC which is headquartered in Richmond. Our services complement, rather than duplicate, those of other organizations. For Richmond residents in particular, the CMWAC is unique in what it has to offer. No other place combines the support and services for each step of the way from first time consumer navigating their way through a complex medical system, through recovery, and onto the empowering role of helper and volunteer for others just beginning their own journeys.**

**The top-down approach of larger organizations will always dominate the scene, but there remains a need for a home-grown Richmond grass-roots organization that was built from the people up, by consumers for consumers. Who better to be the voice of the people that we are aspiring to help? If we let fall this award-winning jewel of Richmond, this embodiment of citizen caring and volunteerism at its best, then what message do we send about our values and beliefs? The CMWAC was born in the heart of Richmond: the of Richmond deserve a CMWAC that is strong and vibrant.**

**Please continue to support our mission.**

**Yours truly,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edwin Tam', written in a cursive style.

**Edwin Tam, M.D.  
President, CMWAC BOARD**

**<sup>1</sup> Chen AW, Kazanjian A. Rate of mental health service utilization by Chinese immigrants in British Columbia. Can J Public Health. 2005; 96:40-51**