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Schizophrenia Research
Foundation (India)



Department of
Youth Mental Health

YMH Newsletter

An initiative of Department of Youth Mental Health - SCARF, India



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FOREWORD

Dr. R. Padmavati MD, DPM
Director

I am delighted to write this foreword for this edition of the newsletter. Youth mental health has been gaining ground, only in the past decade or so, despite the epidemiological evidence of the age of onset of serious mental illness of adults in adolescence. The COVID pandemic has also highlighted the enormous value of promoting positive mental health. It is imperative to address determinants of positive mental health before a specific mental health problem has been identified, with the ultimate goal of improving the positive mental health of the population. The strategies require a broad range of interventions that include young people and all significant others in the environment.

The Department of Youth Mental health at SCARF was born out of a strong felt need to address the urgent needs of the youth – a fact that emerged from over two decades of research centred around the ages of 14 and 24 years. Most evidenced-based interventions focussed on groups diagnosed according to set international criteria. However, we found no services for many distressed youngsters with no defined "diagnoses". Through the years, the team involved with the young have discovered the value of "Catching them early". The digital world has proven to be a great asset in aiding the reach to this population – apps are in place to help early recognition within the framework of privacy and confidentiality.

SCARF's programs are aligned with a positive mental health approach, inclusivity, and reach with a focus on the much-needed understanding for this group of persons who are our future. The team of professionals on board delivering the programs are people with innate abilities to reach out to the young population. This newsletter highlights the various ways in which this enthusiastic team at SCARF are involved in the task. Kudos to the team, and best wishes for a better future for the youth of our universe!

Department Overview



Department of Youth Mental Health was recognised as an independent department in April 2022 and has since been working towards the long-term goals of being a Centre of Excellence in Clinical services, Training and Empowerment and Research pertaining to YMH. These goals are based on the values of creating a safe, inclusive, equitable, accessible, and scientifically appropriate service for youth with a focus on mental health promotion and prevention in addition to delivering clinical services for them. These values are built into each activity we perform at the Department of YMH.

As a natural extension of these values, we have been one of the first organisations in India to create a youth safe space (called the Resource Center for Youth Mental health by SCARF – rYMs) which is an inclusive space run by the youth for all young individuals between the ages 15-25.

The Department of YMH is invested in engaging youth as critical stakeholders in delivering all its services. Thus, it is in the process of creating the first youth advisory group for its research and clinical projects in India.

Clinical Services (July and September 22)	• No. of new patients seen: 210 • No. of follow up patients seen: 516 • Total no. of follow up consultations provided: 750
Clinical services (September to November 22)	• No. of new patients: 167 • No. of follow up patients: 333 • Total no. of consultations provided: 809

Meet the Team



HEADS

Dr Shiva Prakash Srinivasan
(Consultant Psychiatrist & Head
(Clinical Services and Training)

Dr Vijaya Raghavan (Head (Research)
and Consultant Psychiatrist)

COORDINATORS

Ms Greeshma Mohan - FEP
Ms Sangeetha Chandrasekar – YES
Dr Pavithra A- Templeton
Ms Rabiya Syed - care coordinator
Dr (Maj) Karthikeyan P R - RIST
Mr Protush Panda - JAMS

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Ms Shruti Rao - YES
Ms Vijayalakshmi - YES
Ms Anika Salomi – YES
Ms Priyadharshni B - Templeton
Mr Jagadeesan Settu- Templeton
Ms Nithyashri -Templeton
Ms Sreenithy M - Templeton
Ms V S Kalaveena - RIST
Mr Ramakrishnan - RIST
Ms Sangeetha Thiruthuva Rani - RIST
Mr Thariq Akthar Ahmed - RIST
Ms Helen Victory - RIST

Ms Rangeela - JAMS
Mr Aloka Datta Behera -JAMS
Ms Smruti Smita Nayak - JAMS
Mr Karthik - JAMS
Ms Akshaya A - INTEGRITY
Ms Haritha N P - INTEGRITY
Mr Tejas - Research Trainee
Ms Akshaya Rajesh - Research Trainee
Ms Sanjana G - Ex Templeton
Ms Hanisha - Ex - Templeton
Mr Chiranjeevi - Ex- JAMS

Research Projects

Title of the project	Funding agency	Year started	Status
NIHR - Global Health Research Group on Psychosis Outcomes: WIC Programme	NIHR	2018	Completed
citiesRISE: Assessing mental health issues amongst youth in Chennai	citiesRISE	2018	Completed
Mental Health Literacy and Early Access to Mental Health Care among School Students Chennai: A Cluster Randomized Trial	citiesRISE	2019	Completed
To assess the knowledge, attitude, and barriers of mental health professionals in India to prescribing physical activity for mental health	Non-funded	2019	Completed
The impact of child maltreatment on interpersonal distance regulation: A cross-cultural study	Non-funded	2021	Completed
How do young people in low- and middle-income countries connect with mental health science?	citiesRISE/ Wellcome Trust	2021	Completed
Self-reported physical activity levels by delegates attending IConS 2022 and their referral practice	Non-funded	2022	Completed
Transgender Project	Non-funded	2022	Ongoing

Title of the project	Funding agency	Year started	Status
Juveniles Accessing Mental Health Services (JAMS)	Grand Challenges Canada	2021	Ongoing
Effectiveness of interventions on gratitude, kindness and hope to enhance mental well-being among adolescents in school and community settings in south India: A cluster randomised controlled trial	citiesRISE/ Templeton Foundation	2021	Ongoing
A Comprehensive, collaborative, and sustainable intervention package to help young people with depression in educational and clinical settings in Chennai, India	Indira Foundation	2022	Ongoing
Mental health and well-being of young people across different developmental stages and ecological settings using theatre and arts-based interventions	citiesRISE/ RIST	2022	Ongoing
Take-up of Mental Health Care and Social Learning	MIT/Harvard	2022	Ongoing
Addressing intergenerational conflicts to reduce suicidal ideation and behaviour among young people in urban Chennai – INTEGRITY project	Mariwala Health Initiative	2022	Ongoing
YIPEE – Youth co-Production for sustainable Engagement and Empowerment in health	GACD-EU	2022	Yet to start
Improving school ethos towards mental health through whole school mental health interventions: Implementation science approach	Fogarty/NIH	2022	Yet to start

Projects



TEMPLETON

This is an ongoing multicenter behavioural trial for youth in the age group of 12-14 years, funded by the Templeton World Charity Foundation and CitiesRISE. The trial aims to study the effectiveness of positive psychology interventions by developing the character strengths of gratitude, kindness and hope in improving mental health and well-being among youth. The trial incorporates an arts-based mode of delivery of the intervention to enhance an experiential form of learning among the youth.

The study adopts a youth participatory approach that involves the active engagement of youth in every phase, including the initial development of the study, the co-design of the arts-based intervention along with mental health and art experts and also as agents of delivery of the intervention. Older youth in the age group of 18-25 years are trained in mental health and arts to facilitate the delivery of the intervention to their younger peers to ensure better acceptance and sustainability of the model among youth.

The intervention is delivered both in a formal school setting and community gathering spaces, primarily catering to children from low socio-economic backgrounds within Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) limits. The includes 8 weekly sessions, for a duration of 45m minutes, of arts-based, experiential delivery of modules on kindness, gratitude and hope delivered through interactive role-playing, storytelling and visual arts developed as a part of the study. A didactic teen mental health module focusing on mental health literacy is delivered for the same duration by youth facilitators as active control for youth in schools and communities randomised in the study's control arm.

Youth Early Service (YES) Project

The YES project is funded by the Indira foundation and seeks to develop a comprehensive, collaborative, and sustainable intervention package to help young people with depression and anxiety in educational and clinical settings in Chennai. The intervention package includes audio-visual content in English and Tamil.

The project targets to reach 15000 students from college settings and 300 from clinical settings over 3 years. Peer support volunteers chosen from these colleges will also be trained to provide mental health first aid and support. The team aims to train 90 peer support volunteers.

For monitoring and evaluation purposes, the estimated target population sample would be 3000 young people from educational institutions and 100 young people from clinical settings, totalling around 3100 participants.

Juvenile Accessing Mental Health Services (JAMS)



The most vulnerable youth of India are cared for under the Juvenile Justice Act of 2015. This act protects and cares for children who are not cared for by their family and/or are put to harm by caregivers and/or children who may have engaged in activities that harm society at large. There is little to no information about these youth's mental health and well-being.



JAMS is a pilot project working with the vulnerable youth in Child Care Institutions (CCIs) in Chennai (Tamil Nadu) and Ganjam district (Odisha). Grand Challenges Canada funds this program. This study aims to improve adolescents' mental health and well-being (between 12-18 years of age) in these CCIs by teaching them the requisite skills to enhance the same and provide them access to mental health services. The Youth Friendly Spaces (YFS) are a key intervention component. They are designed similar to the community safe spaces created by SCARF to destigmatise the conversation around mental health.

RIST - Project MARCH

The project is funded by Rural India Supporting Trust and is being run in partnership with CitiesRISE. The project aims to deliver art and theatre-based intervention for emotional identification, emotional regulation, communication, social connectedness, and character strength (hope, kindness, gratitude).

The project's pilot phase is being conducted in 2 colleges (St. Thomas college and Annai Violet Arts and Science college) and 2 communities (Periyapalayam and Rajankuppam), with 100 respondents from each site. The target population includes young adults and adults aged 12-24.



INTEGRITY

INTEGRITY is a collaborative project of SNEHA and Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF), Chennai, India. The Mariwala health initiative funds it. The overarching aim of the project is to understand intergenerational conflicts in the Indian context and their impact on suicidal ideation and behaviour among young people (aged between 10-24 years of age) and to co-design with young people and pilot test an intervention module among young people in urban Chennai to address the problems identified.

The team intends to achieve this through 5 work packages. The initial phase involves the development of a conceptual framework explaining the association between intergenerational conflict and suicidal behaviour. This will be followed by co-designing with the stakeholders an intervention module to address conflicts. The intervention will be pilot-tested, post which randomised controlled trials of the intervention will be conducted. The final output will be to scale the intervention implementation to a larger population.

Outreach Activities



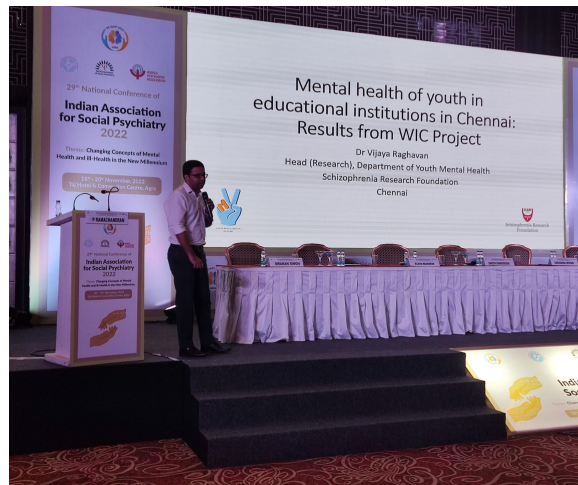
Department of Youth Mental Health has remained at the forefront of outreach activities and community engagement in mental health. On the occasion of World Mental Health Day, the team set out to several schools, colleges, and community settings to deliver mental health literacy. Over 2000 participants benefitted from the mental health awareness programme. The discussion topics included an introduction to mental health, mental well-being, stress and anxiety management, resources for help-seeking, building resilience, peer support, and media and mental health. The talks were well received, with eager participation from the audience.

The team conducted a session at Orient Blackswan to teach educators about helping children recover from the pandemic. The Department also provided a 6-week course to the staff of Initium, a CA firm, on building resilience, improving communication and engagement with work and motivation. Peer support volunteer training has also been completed at Krea University.



Research Publications

- Srinivasan, S. P., Arumugam, C., Rangeela, E., Raghavan, V., & Padmavati, R. (2022). Bullying among children and adolescents in the SAARC countries: A Scoping review. *Heliyon*, e09781. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09781>
- Pfaltz, M. C., Halligan, S. L., Haim-Nachum, S., Sopp, M. R., Åhs, F., Bachem, R., ... Raghavan, V., ... & Seedat, S. (2021). Social functioning in individuals affected by childhood maltreatment: establishing a research agenda to inform interventions. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000523667>
- Srinivasan, S. P., Mohan, G., Rabiya, S., Chandrasekar, S., & Raghavan, V. (2021). Creating comprehensive youth mental health services in low-resource settings: Schizophrenia research foundation experience. *Indian Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 37(4), 452. https://doi.org/10.4103/ijsp.ijsp_451_20
- Kumar S, Mohanraj R, Lidiya A, Karthikeyan D, Kannan L, Azariah F, Sinha M, Raghavan V, Kumar S, Thara R. Exploring Perspectives on Mental Well-Being of Urban Youth from a City in South India. *World Soc Psychiatry*, 2021;3:87-91. https://doi.org/10.4103/wsp.wsp_17_21
- Srinivasan SP, Chandrasekaran S. Care of transgender individuals in India: A clinical perspective. *Indian J Soc Psychiatry* 2020;36:284-8.
- Goutham, S., & Raghavan, V. (2020). Prevalence and family factors associated with loneliness during COVID-19: A cross-sectional study from South India. *Indian Journal of Mental Health and Neurosciences*, 3(2), 61-67. <https://doi.org/10.32746/ijmhns.2020.v3.i2.52>
- Dhandapani, V. R., Chandrasekaran, S., Singh, S., Sood, M., Chadda, R. K., Shah, J., ... & Singh, S. P. (2021). Community stakeholders' perspectives on youth mental health in India: problems, challenges and recommendations. *Early Intervention in Psychiatry*, 15(3), 716-722. <https://doi.org/10.1111/eip.12984>
- RAGHAVAN, V., SANJANA, G. (2022). RESEARCH ARTICLE: Ethical challenges faced by community mental health workers in urban Chennai. *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics*, VII (4), 290.



Conferences

The team has been actively attending and presenting at national and international conferences.

Ms Sanjana Goutham and Dr Pavithra Arunachaleeswaran presented their research at the 'International Association of Youth Mental Health (IAYMH), Copenhagen Conference' in September 2022. Ms Sanjana's oral presentation was on "The pathologising of our existence: Understanding mental health problems and pathways of help seeking among LGBTQ youth." Dr Pavithra presented on "Understanding Actors and channels for youth mental health engagement in Low-and middle-income countries: A mixed method Study."

Dr Vijaya Raghavan presented at the Indian Association for Social Psychiatry 2022 national conference on "Mental health of youth in educational institutions in Chennai: Results from WIC Project" in Agra.

The YMH team put forth their research findings at the ANCIPS (Vishakhapatnam) and TANPSYCON (Kodaikanal) conferences in 2022.

Project JAMS team also presented at the International Conference on Schizophrenia (IConS X) in August 2022.

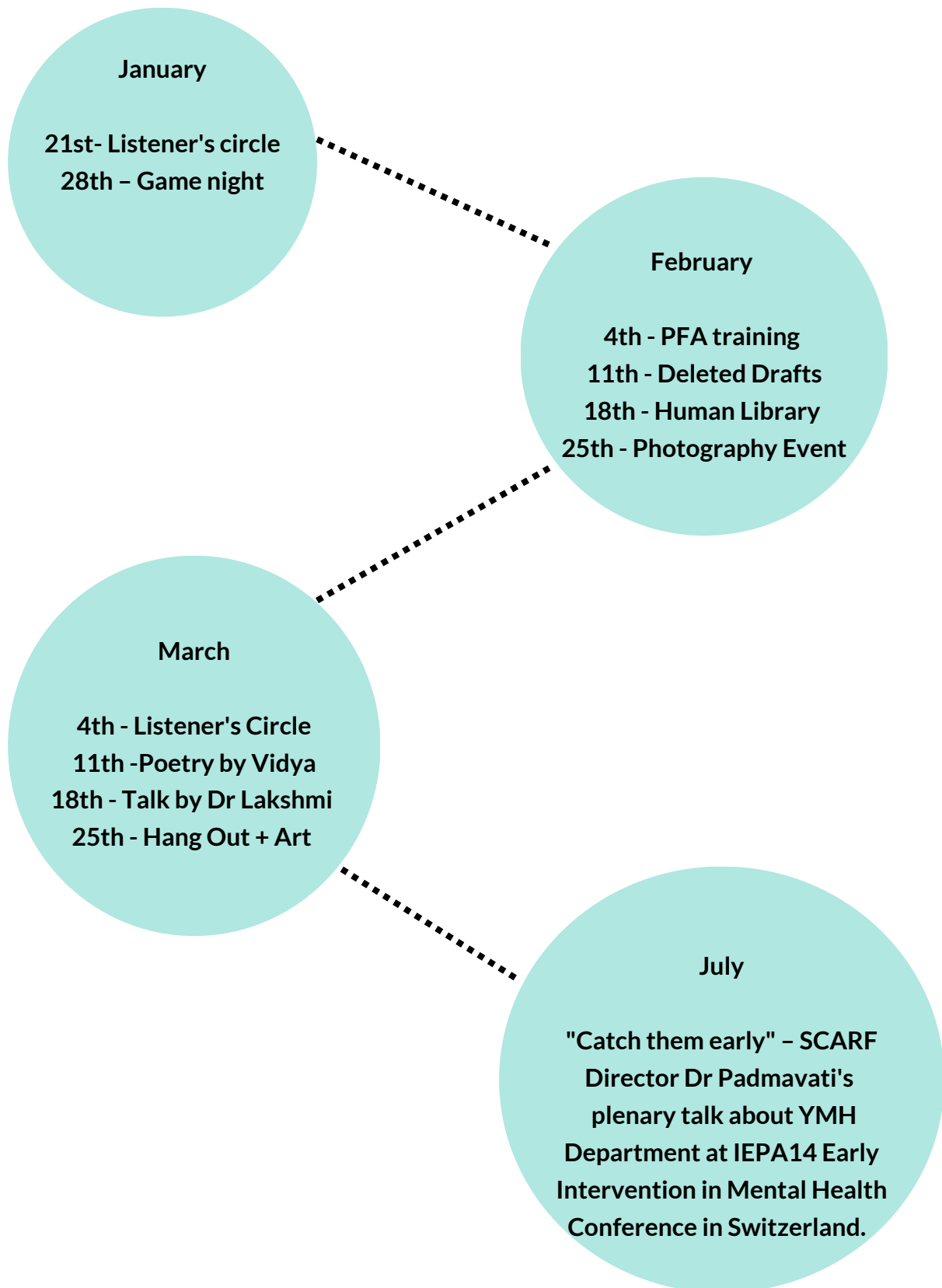
Awards/ Grants Won

- Dr Shiva Prakash Srinivasan, Consultant Psychiatrist and Head of Clinical Services and Training wing of YMH Department, won the 'Behind the success award 2022' hosted by Sahodaran, an LGBTQ organisation. The award was in recognition of Dr Shiva Prakash's work with the queer community. It was presented on the occasion of the 'திருநங்கைகளின் முப்பெரும் விழா 2022'.
- Priyadharshini B and Jagadeesan Settu, Research Assistants in the YMH department, won the PIECEs Small Scale Research Grant for their proposal on "ADEPT Project – Of the people, for the people, by the people: Development of an Advisory board for Experience-enriched service and research in Psychosis treatment." As young researchers, they see this as a unique opportunity pushing them towards providing a significant role and comfortable space for individuals with lived experience to collaborate on research.



- Dr (Major) Karthikeyan P R, Research coordinator of project RIST, received PIECEs SSR Grant for the proposal on "Operational research to evaluate Namma Area, an in-operational service for the persons with mental illnesses, using mixed method approach."

Upcoming Events



Clients' Work

Self-harm

When the agony inside festers to blow,
when the knife in your hand is held in
reverse,
there are things I want you to know,
we are not weak, timid or a hint of cowards,
for the biggest hearts hold the heaviest pain,
but there are more ways to burst that needs
not a scar,
hit the weights or rant your wrath,
for these scars of mine are tainted with
regret.



Addiction

There has never been a big bad wolf to battle,
it's a tiny elf whispering words of
encouragement,
just another puff, another game, another
glass,
the vice matters not, but the elf's safely
perched,
the longer you listen, the deeper grows its
claws,
until the day comes when you can hear no
one else,
but by then, it will be too late,
you are just a puppet enabling elvish whims.

