

## **BDF180022: From Addiction to Creation: Project on Using Creative Arts for Drug Use Prevention and Young Adult Drug Users Empowerment (Project “CAPE”)**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Background:** In Hong Kong, drug addiction among young adults has become an increasingly prevalent issue, with many turning to drug use as a means of coping with stress, mood-related problems, and boredom. Surprisingly, over 80% of young adults with drug addiction do not seek professional help or other forms of social support in dealing with problems resulting from taking drugs. Currently, most drug rehabilitation services in Hong Kong focus on reducing drug use and providing psychoeducation on drug-related mental health issues. However, there is a critical need to innovate and revamp these services to better support young adult drug abusers in coping with their addiction.

**Objectives:** The objectives of this project were to integrate creative arts into drug rehabilitation services in Hong Kong, and explore its effectiveness, acceptability and practicality among young adult drug abusers and caseworkers. Additionally, this project aimed to promote social change by using the arts to provide support for individuals struggling with drug addiction.

**Research Methods:** The program evaluation study assessed the potential benefits of the two major program components: (1) the creative arts intervention program for drug rehabilitees, and (2) the Train-the-Trainer program for frontline professionals. Evaluation for the creative arts intervention program adopted a mixed-methods, randomised controlled study design, with two assessment time points (T<sub>0</sub> and T<sub>1</sub>) using both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry. For this research initiative, a total of 260 drug rehabilitees were included in the evaluation in Hong Kong and quantitative data were collected on two separate time points: baseline (T<sub>0</sub>) and 8-week follow-up (T<sub>1</sub>); amongst them **132 were young adult participant aged between 21 and 35**. In the focus group interview, we have interviewed 30 young adult drug rehabilitees at the end of the program completion. For the Train-the-Trainer program, a total of 30 caseworkers filled in an exit poll survey upon completion of the 4-day training and 10 of them were invited to take part in the focus group interview. All data were collected between June 2019 and May 2023.

**Data Analysis:** For the quantitative data of randomised-controlled study, descriptive statistics and independent t-tests were used to assess sample homogeneity, and Repeated Measures ANOVAs with Bonferroni Test were adopted to assess the effect of the intervention. Whereas quantitative data for the train-the-trainer program, descriptive statistics were produced to obtain an overall satisfaction and perceived effectiveness of the training modules in enhancing the knowledge, skills, and efficacy in conducting creative arts drug rehabilitation program of the caseworkers. For both studies, qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the in-depth interview sessions for the rehabilitees and frontline professionals.

**Results:** Results of the randomised-controlled study yielded emerging evidence to suggest the effectiveness of the creative arts interventions in enhancing positive affect in rehabilitees (aged between 21 and 35) who participated in the creative arts intervention, compared with the treatment-as-usual condition. Findings also showed potential gains in alleviating anxiety, reducing self-

defeating tendency, enhancing drug-related coping through stopping unpleasant emotion thinking, adopting problem-focused coping, as well as improving drug avoidance self-efficacy. Further exploration might be needed to understand the value of the intervention program in reducing depressive symptoms, negative affect, and improving self-soothing tendency. Similar findings were also reported in the aggregate data with participants ranging from 21 to 60, yielding additional information to support the potential benefits and effectiveness of the creative arts intervention in improving psychosocial wellbeing of drug rehabilitees. Focus group interviews with rehabilitees attending the program revealed additional gains reported by the participants, including improved mood management, enhancing social relationships, cultivating self-awareness, self-confidence, and psychological flexibility. Participants regarded the non-verbal expression, embodiment and concretization of experience, as well as creativity; artistic pleasure is the key element underlying their positive changes; emphasis was placed on the facilitation skills of the facilitator to instil hope and common humanity, and facilitate interpersonal learning.

Evaluation of the train-the-trainer program showed that the training program was regarded as practical, insightful, and satisfying by frontline professionals who participated in the training. While the trainees regarded that the training was helpful in enhancing their knowledge competence, practice competence, and self-competence in delivering creative arts intervention to their service users, they expressed enthusiasm for further training to enhance their skills in this area and to work around the environment challenges they encountered in implementing creative arts interventions in the drug rehabilitation setting.

**Conclusion and Implications:** Creative arts intervention is a culturally relevant, emerging evidence, and person-centred approach to drug rehabilitation in Hong Kong. The creative arts intervention is well-received by both the service users, and frontline professionals in the field – both parties found the application of creative arts in rehabilitation service effective, meaningful, and satisfying. Findings from the present study also revealed that creative arts did not only benefit young adults drug rehabilitees, but also those who are older in age. Frontline professionals shared their passion for further training, and their support to the furtherance of creative arts interventions as an alternative to traditional form of drug rehabilitation. Further research efforts and training resources will contribute to the course, and the holistic wellbeing of those who are struggling with the issues of addiction.