

## **Keynote Speech: Lifestyle risk and protective factors for youth mental health: findings from the Hong Kong Youth Epidemiological Study (HK-YES)**

**Speaker: Prof. Eric Chen**

### **Abstract**

Young people are most vulnerable to the development of mental disorders across all age groups, yet they are least likely to seek professional help. Deterioration in youth mental health has been observed globally over the past decade. Amongst various possible factors, the rapid environmental changes – including lifestyle – appear to play a critical role. Using data from the recently completed first household-based epidemiological study on youth mental health in Hong Kong (HK-YES), we examined potential lifestyle factors associated with 12-month major depressive episode (MDE) in addition to other personal and environmental risk factors in 3030 young people. Specifically, we found that smartphone overuse, poorer sleep quality, frequent nightmares, fewer days of regular exercise, and irregular breakfast habits are significantly associated with 12-month MDE. In addition, dissatisfaction with living space was also found to be among the significant factors. These are factors that are generally “modifiable” and can be critical for youth mental health interventions. The relatively lower stigma profile of these factors can also help open discussions with young people and improve engagement. How these factors may each have an impact on youth mental health and may be targeted in future interventions are discussed.