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PLENARY ABSTRACT

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Youth Mental Health Needs in response to Social Unrest and Covid-19 Pandemics

Early Intervention for Youth Mental Health is an important strategy for improving population health. Drawing on the success in early intervention for psychosis, various programs have developed preventative intervention approaches for a wider range of youth mental health conditions.

We describe how such a model is adapted for Hong Kong in the context of the changing youth mental health needs in response to the recent population-level stressors, namely challenges from social unrest and from the COVID pandemic situation.

To inform early detection and preventative approaches we review data from a youth epidemiological study as well as a large-scale online survey. Data suggests a high level of distress in young people in terms of depressive and PTSD symptoms. Unrest, pandemic, and personal stress events cumulatively affect distress levels. PTSD and depression comorbidity is common. Personal background such as early adversity and psychiatric history also resilience play a role. Event-based Rumination appears to be an important mediator between stressors and distress.

We discuss the implications of these findings in relation to possible strategies for early intervention.