

Press Release on 30 December 2006
**The Survey Results on “The Qualifications & Training of
Clinical Psychologists as Understood by the Public”**

Part I

- 1.1 The Division of Clinical Psychology (DCP) of the Hong Kong Psychological Society (HKPS), formed in January 1982, is the professional body in Hong Kong representing the specialty of Clinical Psychology. DCP’s mission is to promote and guide the standard of practice and teaching of Clinical Psychology in HK, as well as to disseminate psychological knowledge to the public to enhance the well-being of the public. HKPS has a Professional Register containing the names of qualified Clinical Psychologists recognized by HKPS.
- 1.2 In recent years, DCP has been receiving numerous public enquiries on how to seek service from a qualified Clinical Psychologist and how to become a Clinical Psychologist in Hong Kong. More and more people are getting concerned about their mental health, and are ready to seek professional help from a Clinical Psychologist. More people are getting interested in the profession too. With this trend, we notice that there are increasing programmes highlighting that they can help people pave their way to becoming a professional psychologist. However, such programmes may not meet the benchmark criteria of Clinical Psychology Training Programmes of DCP or other professional bodies in developed countries. At present, there is no Statutory Registration of Clinical Psychologists. Due to lack of understanding of the qualifications and training of Clinical Psychologists, the general public may seek services from unqualified service providers, or enrol in substandard training programmes. We have grave concerns over the negative impact of such programmes on the quality of the local Clinical Psychological Services.
- 1.3 In view of the above, DCP entrusted the Public Opinion Poll of the University of Hong Kong (POP) to conduct a survey in late November this year. The aim of the Survey is to find out the public’s understanding and expectations of Clinical Psychologists. The whole operation of the Survey, including questionnaire design, data collection and analysis, was handled independently by POP. That is to say, POP is solely responsible for the results of the Survey.
- 1.4 Through this press release, DCP hopes that the general public can gain a better understanding of how to seek services from qualified Clinical Psychologists and choose recognized Clinical Psychology Training Programmes. Based on the Survey findings, DCP hopes to make recommendations to the Government regarding its policy on the training and services of Clinical Psychologists.

Part II

- 2.1 The Survey was conducted through telephone interviews by interviewers under close supervision. To minimize sampling errors, telephone phone numbers were first drawn randomly from the residential telephone directories as "seed numbers", from which another set of numbers was generated using the "plus/minus one/two" method, in order to capture the unlisted phone numbers. Duplicated numbers were then filtered, and the remaining numbers were mixed in a random order to yield the final telephone sample.
- 2.2 The respondents were Cantonese-speaking local citizens of 18 years of age or above. After reaching the target household, one of the household members who met the criteria of this Survey was selected for interview based on the "next birthday rule", that is, selecting the person who had his/her birthday next from all those present and who fit the criteria.
- 2.3 The telephone interviews were conducted from 1 to 5 December 2006. 514 eligible Hong Kong residents were successfully interviewed. The overall response rate was 61.1%. The standard sampling error was less than 2.2 percentage points. The sampling error based on the full sample was thus less than ± 4.4 percentage points at 95% confidence level.

Part III

Knowing Clinical Psychologist

- 3.1 More than 80% of the interviewees have heard of Clinical Psychologist.

Understanding of qualifications of Clinical Psychologists

- 3.2 Although the majority of interviewees have heard of Clinical Psychologist, only 8% of the 514 interviewees could correctly tell a Master Degree in Clinical Psychology being the minimum qualifications of a Clinical Psychologist. 15% of the interviewees thought a general Master Degree being the minimum qualifications; 29% a general Bachelor Degree; 16% a Degree or Diploma in Psychology or related subject.

Choice of Clinical Psychologists

- 3.3 In choosing the services of Clinical Psychologists, more than 80% of the interviewees considered it "very important" or "quite important" that service providers had met the training requirements of the professional body. Only about 1% considered the training requirements of the professional body unimportant.

Expectations of the training requirements of Clinical Psychologists

- 3.4 More than 85% of the interviewees were inclined to support the idea that Clinical Psychologists working in the public sector or private sector should

have completed the Clinical Psychology Training Programme as required by the professional body. Nearly 90% of the interviewees supported the idea that Clinical Psychology Training Programmes offered in HK should meet the benchmark criteria of Clinical Psychology Training Programmes of the professional body. About 6% was neutral in opinion. Only 2% objected to the requirements.

Regulation of Service

3.5 55% of the interviewees opined that the Government should set up Statutory Registration to regulate the professional service of Clinical Psychologists. 37% opined that the existing Society-based Registration was already adequate in regulating the service.

Society-based Registration

3.6 HKPS has set up a Society-based Registration Board to help the public assess qualified Clinical Psychologists. A Directory of Registered Clinical Psychologists containing the names of qualified Clinical Psychologists recognized by HKPS can be viewed by the public on the website <http://www.hkps.org.hk/dir.html>. 60% of the interviewees considered HKPS's Directory of Registered Clinical Psychologists helpful to the public in seeking services of qualified Clinical Psychologists. About 25% held neutral opinion. 7% considered the Directory of little help or no help at all.

Part IV Conclusion from Survey Findings

4.1 Although most people in HK are aware of the profession of Clinical Psychologist, the general public actually has little understanding of the training and qualifications of Clinical Psychologists. Hence, in seeking services, people may have difficulty in differentiating whether the service provider possesses the required qualifications to practise or not, and whether the service provider is practising ethically. In the private sector, this problem is more serious as most employers in the public sector require applicants to meet the qualifications required by the professional body.

4.2 As the general public has little understanding of the professional qualifications of Clinical Psychologists, people have to rely on the benchmark criteria laid down by the professional body and its registration system to identify qualified Clinical Psychological Services. At present, there is no Statutory Registration in Hong Kong, Society-based Registration has no legislative status and its power to regulate the Services is limited. The maintenance of the standard of training and practice of Clinical Psychologists depends very much on the self-discipline of individual training institutes and Clinical Psychologists, provided that an individual Clinical Psychologist joins the Register of the professional body and to abide by its Code of Professional Conduct, and a training institute ensures its training standard meets the benchmark criteria as required by the professional body.

- 4.3 Most people expect Clinical Psychologists to fulfill the training standard and qualifications required by the professional body. In seeking Clinical Psychological Services, to ensure that the service provider is a qualified Clinical Psychologist and is willing to abide by the Code of Professional Conduct of the professional body, the public are advised to browse at <http://rouge.hkps.org.hk/dcp>. (See also Appendix 1: Qualifications of Clinical Psychologists.)
- 4.4 DCP appeals to training institutes not to take advantage of the absence of Statutory Registration in HK to provide Clinical Psychology Training Programmes not meeting the benchmark criteria required by DCP or other professional bodies in developed countries, and to disregard the expectations of the public towards the profession. Such programmes may bring negative impact on the quality of Services in HK, and may lead people taking the programme to time and financial loss. People interested in pursuing a career in Clinical Psychology are reminded to be prudent in choosing training programmes. Thorough investigation into the institute's history and resources, the qualifications and background of teaching staff and clinical supervisors, the mode of study, nature of clinical practice and clinical supervision are deemed necessary. (See also Appendix 2: Benchmark Criteria of Clinical Psychology Training Programmes.)
- 4.5 The Survey findings indicate that the majority of the public think that the Government should set up Statutory Registration for Clinical Psychologists. To protect the interest of the public, and to respond to the expectations of the public, DCP urges the Government to address the needs of the public and speed up the legislative regulation of Clinical Psychological Services.