

# **Linking Hearts - Advancing Mental Health Care of University Students Through Interdisciplinary Collaboration: An Implementation Research at Universities in Jinan, Shandong, China**

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**Aims & objectives:** The aim of Linking Hearts is to study the adaptation and implementation of an integrated evidence-informed mental health intervention, Acceptance and Commitment to Empowerment – Linking Youth and ‘Xin’ (hearts) (ACE-LYNX) in Jinan, Shandong, China. The objectives are to: (a) improve access to quality mental health care for university students in Jinan, Shandong Province, China; (b) reduce stigma against mental illness that impede help-seeking, targeted prevention, early identification, timely treatment, and optimal recovery; (c) improve interdisciplinary collaboration through collective empowerment and capacity building; and (d) advance implementation science knowledge in the field of community mental health practices/interventions that can be scaled up in other real-life contexts.

We will begin with an assessment of contexts, consisting of a university student survey (n=600), student focus groups (n=144), and stakeholder and professional focus groups (n=144). The data will inform intervention adaptation. Using a train-the-trainer model, we will train university students (n=360) and interdisciplinary professionals (n=360) and to become mental health champions. All champions will be supported to carry out mental health promotion through a Learning Management System and Weixin (WeChat). They will be followed over 6 months for their outreach and health promotional activities.

**Current status:** We have received research ethics approvals from the six partner universities in Jinan and Shandong Mental Health Centre. We are currently awaiting approval from Canadian universities. We anticipate that Phase One data collection on contextual analysis will take place from December 2018 to March 2019.

**Milestones accomplished:** We have achieved a number of milestones: (1) established Canadian-Chinese Steering Committee and defined Research Clusters; (2) developed Terms of Reference for the project and each cluster; (3) held Canadian-Chinese Co-PI in-person team working meetings in Toronto to finalize research plan; (4) established research clusters and cluster leads at the six partner universities in Jinan and in Canada; (5) Chinese-Canadian team collaborated in finalizing data collection tools; and (6) Canadian team delivered training of ACE-LYNX intervention to core trainers in Jinan.

**Challenges:** The key challenge we face is related to finding e-technologies suitable for our project needs and workable in both Canada and China, including a suitable e-learning platform,

e-survey system and also a data storage system accessible by Chinese and Canadian team members.