



Symposium 1: Addressing the Ethical Issues in Adolescent Addictions

Abstract

Adolescent addictions present unique ethical challenges that require careful consideration, especially in Singapore, where the law enforces a zero-tolerance approach to illegal addictive substances. Confidentiality and privacy must be balanced with the need to involve parents, while informed consent necessitates that adolescents fully understand their treatment options and the role of parental consent. Respecting adolescent autonomy while ensuring their well-being poses a significant ethical dilemma. Addressing the stigma associated with addiction and avoiding harmful labeling is crucial to support recovery. Equitable access to treatment, irrespective of socioeconomic status, must be ensured. Treating co-occurring mental health disorders alongside addiction (dual diagnosis) requires coordinated care and ethical sensitivity. Harm reduction strategies, though sometimes controversial, need to be weighed against the goal of achieving abstinence, especially within Singapore's strict legal framework. Involving adolescents in research on addiction must adhere to strict ethical standards to protect this vulnerable population. Finally, cultural sensitivity is paramount, necessitating tailored treatment approaches that respect diverse attitudes towards addiction. This talk will explore these ethical issues, emphasizing the importance of ethical considerations in enhancing treatment outcomes and fostering ongoing dialogue and education in adolescent addiction treatment.

**Associate Professor Daniel Fung
Senior Consultant, Department of
Developmental Psychiatry**

**President, College of Psychiatrists,
Academy of Medicine, Singapore**

**Past President, International
Association of Child and Adolescent
Psychiatry and Allied Professions**

CEO, Institute of Mental Health

Biography

Dr Daniel Fung is a child and adolescent psychiatrist and also the CEO of the Institute of Mental Health in Singapore. He is an Adjunct Associate Professor at all 3 Singapore medical schools. Dr Fung is the President of the International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions (IACAPAP) (2018-2022) and President of the College of Psychiatrists, Academy of Medicine, Singapore. Dr Fung has co-authored over 200 peer reviewed research papers, books and book chapters. Dr Fung has actively been involved in developing telepsychiatry in Singapore and has also developed a number of digital mental health solutions in the last 10 years including a patented novel treatment for ADHD.