

Oral

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(Meeting Room 1)

## Oral 3

### [O-3-01] Evaluating the Effectiveness of the "*Shall We Talk?*": Program: A Culturally Tailored Intervention to Address Social Isolation and Improve Well-Being Among Chinese Older Adults in Ontario

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**Objectives:** The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified social isolation and mental health challenges, particularly among older Asian Canadian adults, who face increased loneliness and limited access to culturally responsive support. The "*Shall We Talk?*" program was co-designed as a culturally tailored intervention to enhance relational and resilient care, strengthen communication and interpersonal skills, and reduce social isolation among Chinese older adults. This study evaluates its effectiveness in improving loneliness, communication skills, and well-being.

**Methods:** This pre-post quasi-experimental study recruited 28 participants from community-based geriatric psychiatric services and organizations serving Chinese older adults in Ontario. The intervention included an online social skills course followed by five weekly group-based conversation circles. Data were collected at four-time points: baseline, post-online module, post-group sessions, and post-reunion. Primary outcomes included happiness, loneliness, social engagement, life satisfaction, social competence, and mental health symptoms (depression and anxiety), assessed using validated measures.

**Results:** Participants demonstrated significant improvements in happiness ( $M=6.20$ ,  $SD=2.76$  to  $M=7.75$ ,  $SD=1.02$ ,  $\eta^2=.420$ ,  $p=.023$ ), loneliness ( $M=1.20$ ,  $SD=1.01$  to  $M=0.80$ ,  $SD=0.52$ ,  $\eta^2=.363$ ,  $p=.024$ ), and life satisfaction ( $M=1.45$ ,  $SD=0.69$  to  $M=1.60$ ,  $SD=0.75$ ,  $\eta^2=.194$ ,  $p=.006$ ). Additional improvements were observed in conflict avoidance ( $M=2.50$ ,  $SD=0.83$  to  $M=3.20$ ,  $SD=0.95$ ,  $\eta^2=.152$ ,  $p=.041$ ) and mastery of social skills ( $M=2.20$ ,  $SD=0.52$  to  $M=2.75$ ,  $SD=0.97$ ,  $\eta^2=.261$ ,  $p=.018$ ). These enhancements were sustained over time, particularly following the conversation circles and reunion. While no significant changes were noted in depression or anxiety, qualitative feedback highlighted improvements in psychological well-being, loneliness, communication, confidence, and social connections, and underscored the importance of lifelong learning.

**Conclusion:** The "*Shall We Talk?*" program demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing communication skills, increasing happiness, reducing loneliness, improving life satisfaction, and promoting social competence among Chinese older adults. This study underscores the

potential of culturally relevant programs to enhance social participation and overall well-being. Further research should explore its long-term effects and scalability across broader immigrant communities.