

Symposium | Global Mental Health : [Symposium 41] Reimagining Healing: Traditional Wisdom and Cultural Integration in Global Psychology & Psychiatry

📅 Fri. Sep 26, 2025 1:10 PM - 2:40 PM JST | Fri. Sep 26, 2025 4:10 AM - 5:40 AM UTC 🏢 Session Room 6 (Conference Room B)

[Symposium 41] Reimagining Healing: Traditional Wisdom and Cultural Integration in Global Psychology & Psychiatry

Moderator: Mami Yanai (Integrative Mental Health Centre of Toronto / LOGOEARTH), Hung-Tat (Ted) Lo (University of Toronto, Integrative Mental Health Centre of Toronto)

[SY-41-01] Bridging Worlds of Healing: Seven Modes of Integrating Traditional Medicine and Modern Psychiatry

*Hung-Tat (Ted) Lo^{1,2,3} (1. University of Toronto (Canada), 2. Integrative Mental Health Centre of Toronto (Canada), 3. Hong Fook Mental Health Association (Canada))

Keywords : Cultural Psychiatry、Traditional Healing Systems、Biopsychosocial-Spiritual Model (BPSS)、Integrative Mental Health、Transdisciplinary Dialogue

This presentation reflects on five decades of psychiatric practice in Canada, interwoven with cross-cultural engagement in traditional healing systems. Using the biopsychosocial-spiritual (BPSS) model, it critiques the limits of conventional psychiatry and highlights diverse global approaches that integrate spiritual, cultural, and community-based dimensions of healing.

Drawing on field observations and professional experience, the presentation identifies **seven modes of integration** between traditional medicine and contemporary psychiatry:

- 1. Systemic Integration** – In countries like China, Traditional Chinese Medicine and Western biomedicine coexist in universities and hospitals under a formal dual system.
- 2. Collaboration** – In Ethiopia, Orthodox Christian rituals (holy water, prayer) support mental health alongside clinical services.
- 3. Task-Shifting** – In India, Vikram Patel's *Sangath* model trains lay workers to deliver adapted therapy. In Zimbabwe, the *Friendship Bench* engages 'grandmothers' to offer counseling on "Friendship Benches"—now replicated internationally.
- 4. Incorporation** – In Brazil, Alaska, and New Zealand, traditional ceremonies, storytelling, and spiritual practices are integrated into mainstream care by culturally trained providers. Traditional healing spaces are provided for contact with nature and for ceremonies for aboriginal patients.
- 5. Alternative Therapies** – The West has seen rapid growth in complementary methods such as mindfulness, acupuncture, yoga, often by individual practitioners and psychedelic-assisted therapy is being actively studied.
- 6. Ethno-Specific Services** – Community organizations like Hong Fook Mental Health Association in Canada, and hospital provision of ethno-specific clinics, respond to culturally distinct needs of minority populations.

7. Educational Bridging Initiatives – FACT (Friends of Alternative and Complementary Therapies), founded in Toronto, organized film festivals, interdisciplinary hospital rounds, and healing banquets to promote education and dialogue across traditions.

Through these modes, this presentation advocates for culturally responsive, spiritually inclusive, and community-driven models of care—vital for addressing the unmet needs of our increasingly diverse societies, and furthering the development of a richer and more holistic healthcare system.