

# HRYA MAGAZINE



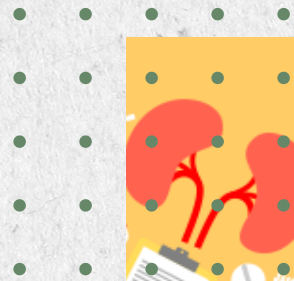
1180+ IMPACT

JULY 2023 | VOL. 1

HUMAN RIGHTS YOUTH ADVOCACY INC

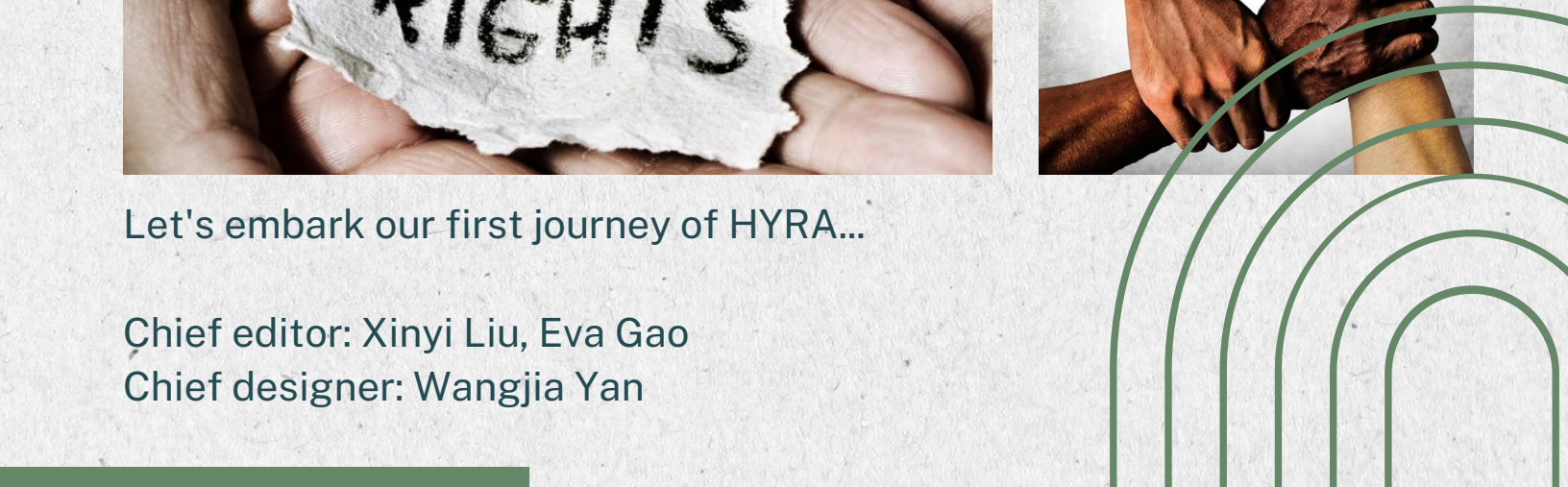


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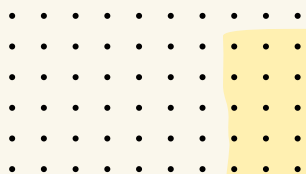
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Chief editor: Yinyi Liu, Eva Gao

Chief designer: Wangjia Yan





# SECTION 1

## HRYA WORK UPDATE





# MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

## MOST CRITICAL ISSUES FOR FEMALE HEALTH.



### Problems

Did you know that menstrual Hygiene is become one of the most critical issues for female health? Poor menstrual hygiene can directly lead to a variety of gynecological diseases. On any given day, more than 300 million women worldwide are menstruating. In total, an estimated 500 million lack access to menstrual products and adequate facilities for menstrual hygiene management (MHM). Most reasons are due to destitute, Non-sterile menstrual products, and lack of menstrual hygiene acknowledgements.

Source:  
Menstrual Health and Hygiene worldbank.org (2022, May 12). The World Bank.



### Fun Fact

According to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program 2012, menstrual hygiene management is defined as:

“Women and adolescent girls are using a clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect menstrual blood, that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary, using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having access to safe and convenient facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials. They understand the basic facts linked to the menstrual cycle and how to manage it with dignity and without discomfort or fear.”

### Our Achievements

As a HRYA youth rights and interests organization, we always implement the concept of the establishment of HR A, so that young people have an in-depth understanding of health rights, persons with disabilities, women's rights and other issues, and to help young people and other groups of people, so that last month, members of our menstrual organization donated 1360 packs of sanitary napkins to 680 female students in Suxian Middle School in Tibet, allowing healthy wind to spread to Tibet and farther away through the HRYA. Here also emerged a number of social love people and young people to pay their efforts for this activity, so that the organization has strengthened the pace of progress!



# MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

## MOST CRITICAL ISSUES FOR FEMALE HEALTH.




Photo above:  
International volunteers are carrying donated sanitary napkins.

Photos to the left:  
Girls are queuing up to receive donated sanitary napkins.







# April 21, 1966. The Mattachine Society organizes a gay rights “Sip-In.”

ART BY:  
CINDY HUANG

## Art Gallery

Art gallery team is a section under HYRA. They believe in the power of creativity and artistry to make a positive impact on society. They are a diverse and inclusive team that welcomes talented volunteers from all corners of the world. Their mission is to use art as a platform to address and shed light on various social topics that matter to us all.

## Pride Month

Because of Pride, last month the gallery team organized an art exhibition with the theme "Rights for LGBTQ+". They believe it is a powerful way to raise awareness and advocate for the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. It turns out they were right. The exhibition undoubtedly brought attention to important issues surrounding equality, acceptance, and social justice.

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NOW FOCUS ON:

ART BY:  
MIA LIANG

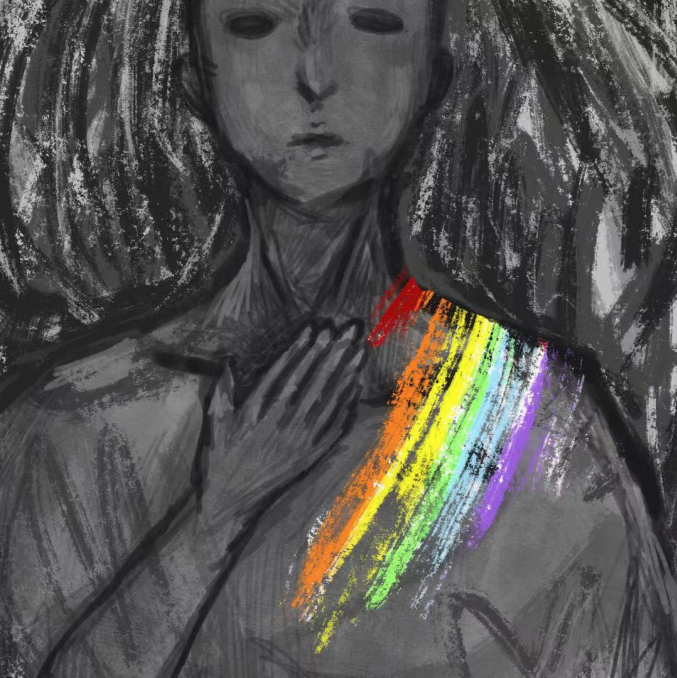
# ART GALLERY

Pride Month Art Exhibition.



@HRYA





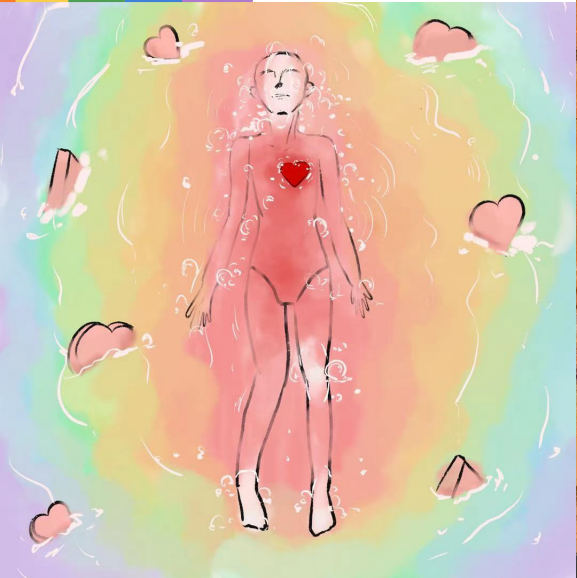
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# ART GALLERY

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Pride Month Art Exhibition.

ART BY:  
CHOLE WANG

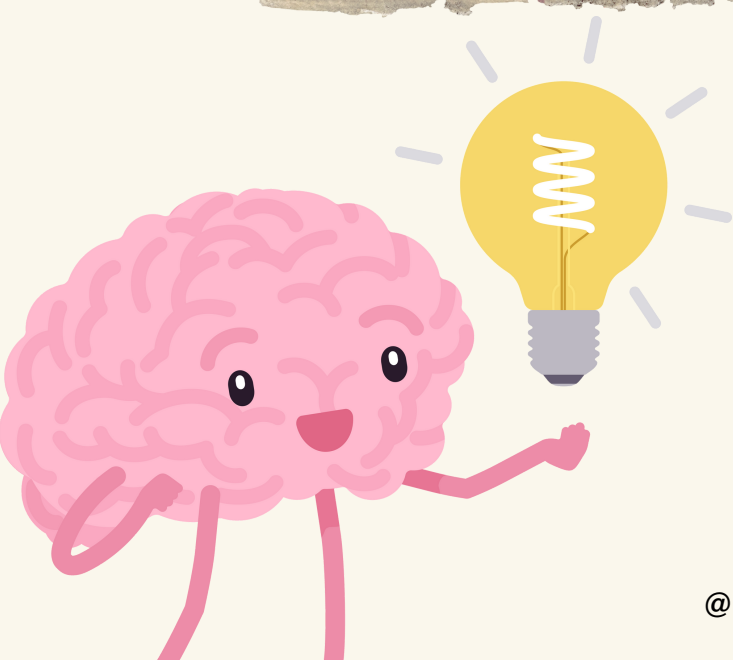




Section

2

BRAIN  
HEALTH  
ADVOCACY





## Immune System Boosters



By: Jenny Ma  
7/9/23

## Fueling Your Brain: The Impact of Nutrients on Brain Health

### Introduction

The brain, as the control center of our bodies, requires proper nourishment to function optimally. While maintaining cognitive health doesn't have a magical solution, research indicates that certain nutrients play a crucial role in supporting brain function and overall brain health. In this article, we will explore the key nutrients that benefit the brain and discuss their diverse effects on brain health.

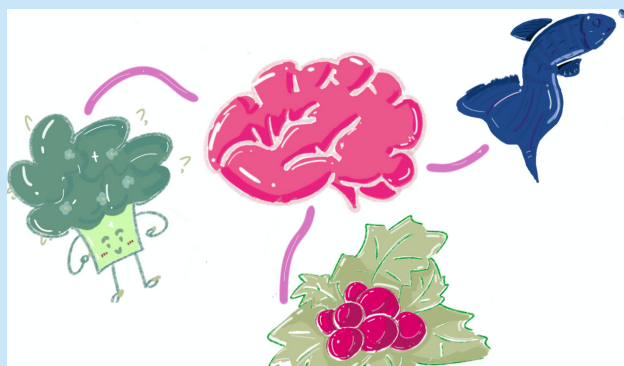
### Nutrients for Brain Health

1. Leafy Greens: Vegetables like kale, spinach, collards, and broccoli are packed with brain-boosting nutrients such as vitamin K, lutein, folate, and beta-carotene. These plant-based foods have been associated with slowing cognitive decline and supporting brain health.
2. Fatty Fish: Fatty fish like salmon, trout, and sardines are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential for brain health. These healthy fats have been linked to lower levels of beta-amyloid, a protein associated with Alzheimer's disease. Regular consumption of fatty fish or omega-3 supplements can help protect against cognitive decline.
3. Berries: Blueberries and other deeply colored berries contain antioxidants called anthocyanins, which reduce brain inflammation and oxidative stress. These effects contribute to improved brain aging and memory. Including berries in your diet can enhance memory and cognitive processes.



4. Coffee and Tea: Caffeine found in coffee and tea can enhance alertness, mood, and concentration. By blocking adenosine, a chemical that induces sleepiness, caffeine promotes increased brain activity. Regular coffee consumption has also been associated with a reduced risk of neurological disorders such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. The high antioxidant content in coffee contributes to its beneficial effects .

5. Walnuts: Walnuts are a valuable source of protein, healthy fats, and alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), an omega-3 fatty acid. ALA-rich diets have been linked to improved cognitive function and lower blood pressure. Including walnuts in your diet benefits both heart and brain health .



Artist: Sizheng Li

## Effects on Brain Health

Each nutrient affects brain health differently. Leafy greens provide vital vitamins and antioxidants that protect against cognitive decline.

Fatty fish and omega-3 fatty acids support the development and maintenance of brain cells, promoting better memory and cognitive function.

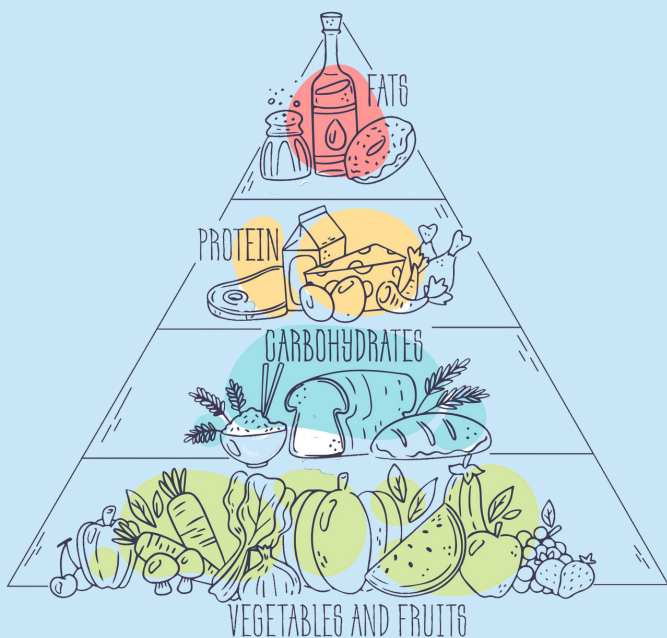
Berries' high antioxidant content combats inflammation and oxidative stress, contributing to improved brain aging and memory.

Coffee and tea, through caffeine and antioxidants, enhance alertness, mood, and concentration while reducing the risk of neurological disorders.

Walnuts, rich in ALA, support cognitive function and contribute to healthier arteries and blood pressure .

## Conclusion

Maintaining a healthy brain requires a balanced diet incorporating nutrient-rich foods. Leafy greens, fatty fish, berries, coffee, tea, and walnuts are top choices for brain health. By including these foods in your diet, you can support brain health and potentially reduce the risk of cognitive decline . Remember, your dietary choices play a crucial role in keeping your brain sharp and functioning optimally.



## References

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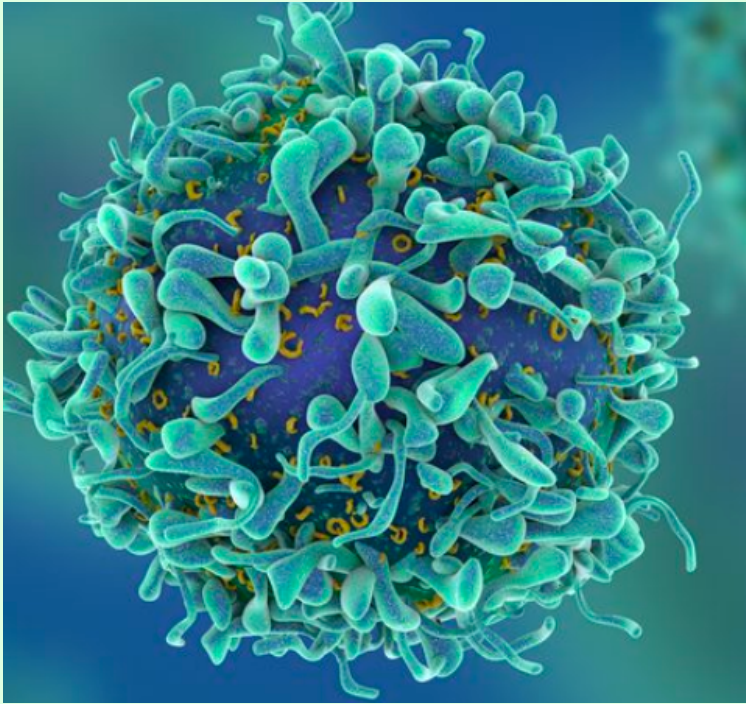
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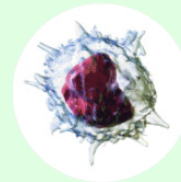
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# IMMUNOCYTE

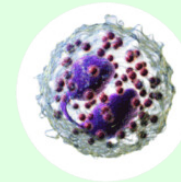
By Charlotte  
7/10/2023



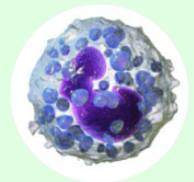
To begin with, what are the immunocytes? Immunocytes are also known as white blood cells. These cells are related to our immune system and they are the main roles in that system, which can help humans against pathogens. In addition, there are five types of white blood cells, for example, monocytes, lymphocytes, neutrophils, basophils, and eosinophils.



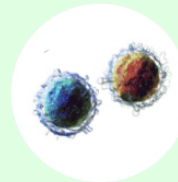
Monocyte



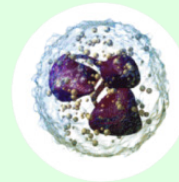
Eosinophil



Basophil



Lymphocytes



Neutrophil

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**T**he cell is the basic unit of the life form. And the basic structures of a cell are the nucleus, which contains genetic information, the cytoplasm (cytosol), which contains fluid liquids and chemical reactions would occur in this place and the cell membrane which is selective and made up of mainly lipids and proteins. In addition, as a human, whose body contains trillions of cells. To go in-depth, there are roughly 37 trillion cells in our bodies. Each cell has its structures and functions. What I want to talk about today's topic, is related to immunocytes. Further, we can regard them as guards as they can fight against pathogens and so protect our bodies.

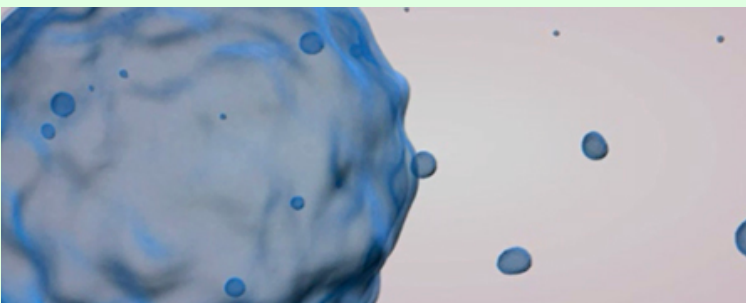
When we get a cold, the most probable symptom that can occur is a fever. You may probably not know that a mild fever is good for you because this indicates that your immunocytes are doing their jobs. Therefore, a mild fever is good for you when you have a cold, isn't it?

Each of them has its structures and functions. Following this, I would like to talk in more detail about lymphocytes as they play a key role in keeping our health. There are two types of lymphocytes, which are T cell and B cell. T lymphocytes can help people from getting infections whilst B lymphocytes can produce antibodies which are proteins that can protect you when there are unwanted substances such as pathogens entering your body.

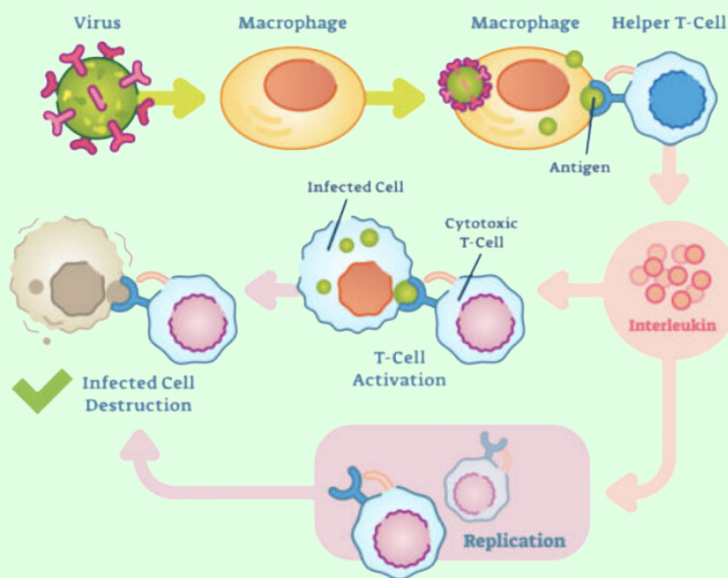
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As I mentioned above that T cells play a role in the immune system, but where can we find them? The answer is that they can be found mainly in lymphoid organs like tonsils, bone marrow, and spleen. T-cell activation is an important process to know to ensure an effective immune system. T-cell activation is a process that recognizes and later kills foreign pathogens. To begin the T cell activation, there are 2 signals that we need to know. First, the APC needs to engulf and digest the pathogen and its specific antigens, capturing its information. Then, it will attach the major histocompatibility complex, or MHC for short. There is a point that you need to notice that the CTL would bind to MHC I whilst the Th would bind with MHC II.

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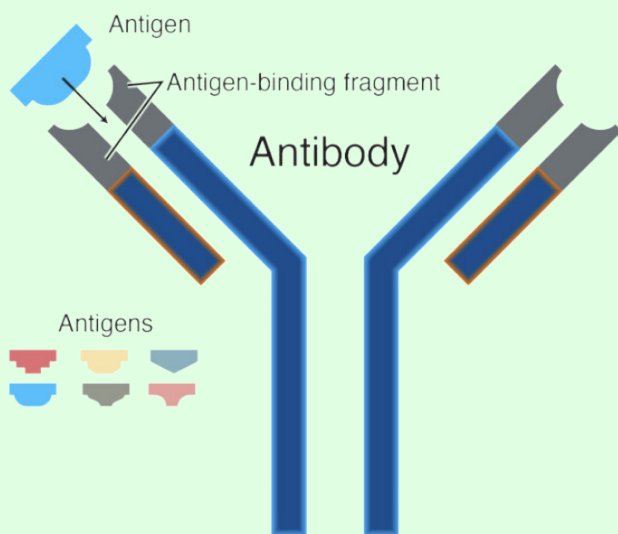






However, the activation could not be activated as this is only the first step of the activation. Then, there is a second signal so-called co-stimulation. In this case, the signal is provided by a receptor expressed on the T cell called cd28. Then, cd28 would bind with a protein which is the b7. Therefore, the activation would occur and a lack of binding would lead to the death of cells.

For B cells, which function is to produce antibodies. when foreign substances are entering our body, because of their specific antigens, B cells could recognize and encounter them. And it is activated when the CD40L on the surface of the Th binds with the CD40 protein on the surface of the B cell and BCRs have been cross-linked.



On the other hand, if the T cell and B cell are attacked, which would cause a significant consequence. One of the problems is leading to an autoimmune disorder. That means our immunocytes would attack our cells or tissues. And if you get this kind of disease, you may feel tired (fatigued), have headaches, and more. Once you get this disease, your immune system could not be recovered. Fortunately, some ways enable your immune system to be controlled. For example, you can eat anti-inflammatory drugs which can reduce inflammation and pain. Also, you can apply physical therapy like doing more exercises.

In conclusion, immunocytes play a key role in maintaining our body's health. Just like soldiers in our bodies to help their owner. Of course, if you get autoimmune diseases caused by T cells and B cells being attacked, even though the system can not be recovered. However, you can control it in different ways. Therefore, keep an optimistic attitude, one thing you need to remember is that methods are always more than trouble.

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**Learning**

# BRAIN HEALTH-- STROKE

Jancy Zhang  
07/21/2023

## Introduction to stroke

A stroke, also called a brain attack, occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is blocked or when there is a bursting occurring in the brain's blood vessels. In these ways, the brain could be partially damaged or die, causing lasting brain damage and long-term disability. In severe cases, death may occur.

The brain is the organ that manages our daily activities, preserves our memories, and develops thoughts, feelings, and verbal expression. The brain also regulates a variety of functions such as breathing, digestion, etc. To function properly, your brain requires oxygen. Brain cells will start to die within a few minutes of a blockage in blood flow, as the brain cells are unable to receive oxygen. This results in a stroke.

Learning more about stroke is important as the sooner treatment is given, the more likely the damage could be minimized. It is important to remember the signs of stroke so that we could seek emergency help as soon as possible.

## Types of stroke

Ischemic stroke and hemorrhagic stroke are the two forms of stroke. An ischemic stroke happens when the blood vessels to the brain are blocked by blood clots or other substances. Whereas a hemorrhagic stroke occurs when an artery in the brain leaks blood or ruptures.

## Signs of Stroke

F.A.S.T. is an easy method for identifying stroke.

Face: Are there any signs of face drooping on one side when the person smiles?

Arm: Are there any signs of one arm lower when the person raises both arms?

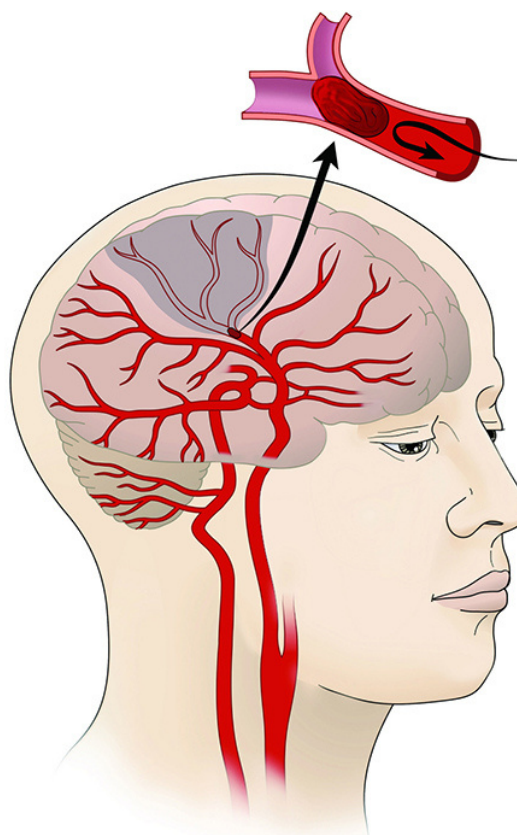
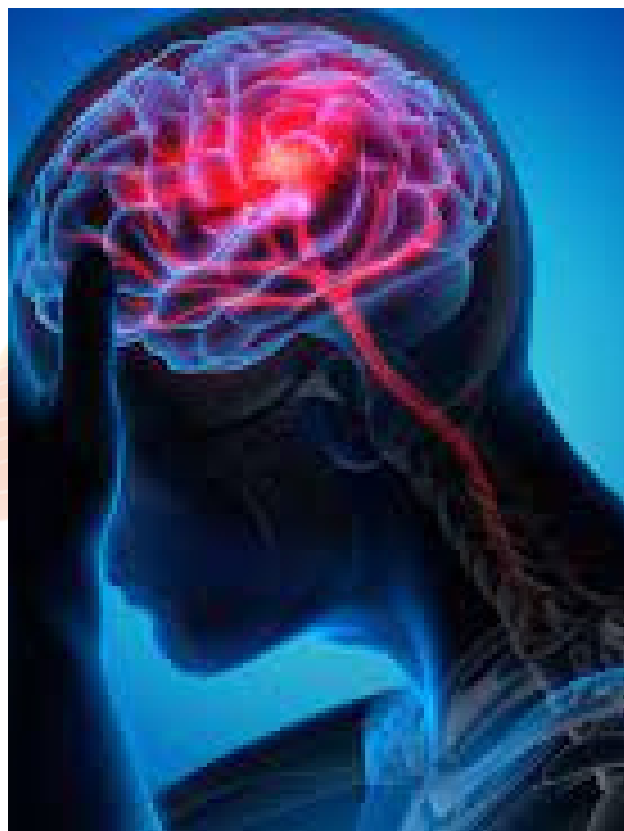
Speech: Are there any signs of unclear speech from the person when he/she repeats what you say?

Time: Act fast and call 999 and seek emergency help if you identify any of the signs.



## How to prevent stroke?

1. Control your medical conditions such as controlling high blood pressure, and controlling diabetes. Moreover, if you have any of these conditions, seek treatment to help reduce your risk of stroke: high cholesterol, carotid artery disease, peripheral artery disease, atrial fibrillation (AFib), heart disease, sickle cell disease or obstructive sleep apnea,
2. Don't smoke or quit smoking as cigarettes increase the risk of having a stroke.
3. Manage a healthy weight. Other stroke risk factors including high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes are all influenced by obesity. You can always calculate your body mass index (BMI) to know if you are within the healthy range of weight.
4. Eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables. A diet containing five or more daily servings of fruits or vegetables may reduce your risk of stroke.
5. Exercise. Exercise can enhance the general health of your blood vessels and heart as well as reduce your blood pressure and raise your level of HDL cholesterol. Additionally, it aids in stress reduction, diabetic management, and weight loss.
6. Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all. Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol raises your chances of high blood pressure, ischemic strokes, and hemorrhagic strokes.
7. Beware of illicit drugs. A transient ischemic attack (TIA) or a stroke has been linked to several street drugs, including cocaine and methamphetamine.







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WHAT NEGATIVE IMPACTS  
DOES CHRONIC STRESS BRING  
TO YOUR BRAIN?

# PRESSURE & BRAIN

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By: Jancy Zhang

What negative impacts does chronic stress bring to your brain?

There are lots of negative effects that chronic stress can bring to our brains. Memory loss is one of the effects of prolonged stress that researchers have seen. People who are under stress frequently forget things. According to research, even a little stress, like being late for work, may make you forget basic things like where your keys are. High cortisol levels have even been linked to deficits in short-term memory in research on aged rats. The core theory is that the brain is diverting its resources because it is in survival mode, not memory mode, according to Dr. Kerry Ressler, chief scientific officer at McLean Hospital and professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

Both gray matter and white matter make up your brain. White matter connects brain regions and conveys information, while gray matter is used for decision-making and problem-solving. Chronic stress has been shown to lead to an overproduction of the myelin sheaths that make up white matter and a decrease in the production of gray

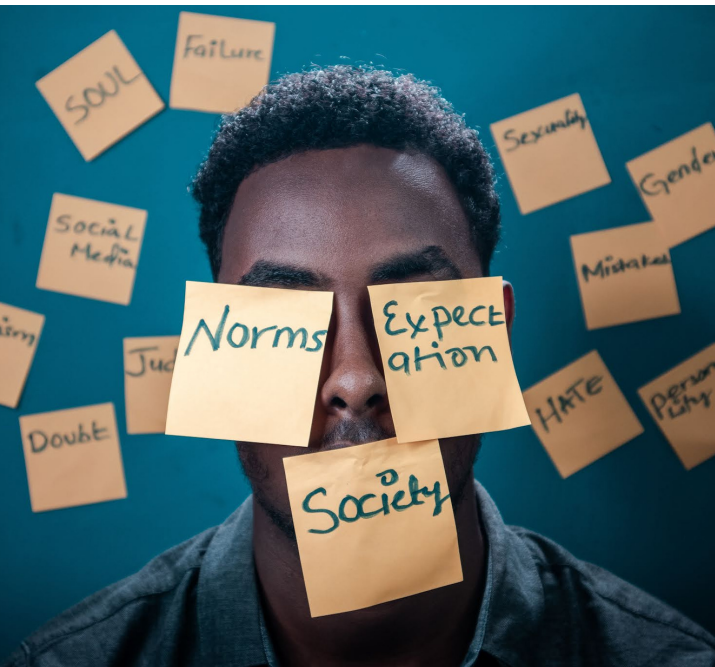
matter. A gray matter and white matter imbalance could result in permanent changes to the brain's structure. The emergence of mental illness may also be influenced by an imbalance between white and gray matter in the brain. According to the notion, the timing and balance of communication are hampered when some brain regions have an abundance of myelin. Additionally, it was discovered that persistent stress can harm hippocampus function. Memory, notably spatial memory, memory consolidation, and memory transmission, are all regulated by the hippocampus.

Researchers have proposed that long-term stress can even damage developing neurons in the hippocampus of the brain. One of only two places where neurons are made is the hippocampus. Even though it does not appear to have an impact, new neurons created during stressful times have a higher chance of dying within a week, according to studies.

While the size of the brain as a whole tends to stay roughly the same, it has been discovered that persistent stress in otherwise healthy people can lead to shrinkage of the brain's regions responsible for emotions, metabolism, and memory. When exposed to severe stressors, those with chronic stress were also more likely to undergo brain shrinkage. This implies that those who are constantly stressed out may find it more difficult to handle additional stress.

So what could we do if we want to relieve our stress? Here are some tips:

1. Exercise
2. Eat a health diet
3. Meditate
4. Play some relaxing music
5. Reach for help





# THE Key to Brain Health:

MAINTAINING  
MENTAL  
WELLNESSES



by:  
Yolanda  
07.31.2023

When we discuss health issues, physical health is undoubtedly of paramount importance. However, we often overlook another crucial area - mental health. The health of our brain plays a significant role in overall mental health. So, how should we maintain mental health to enhance brain health?

Firstly, we must clarify: brain health is the cornerstone of mental health. It is responsible for our various functions like thinking, memory, emotions, attention, and self-awareness. If there is a disorder in brain function, it could lead to various mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia, among others. Therefore, maintaining brain health is an effective means of preventing these diseases.



So, how do we maintain brain health? On the one hand, we need healthy living habits. This includes a balanced diet, moderate exercise, sufficient sleep, and avoiding smoking and excessive drinking. These habits can help maintain the physical health of the brain and improve the brain's blood supply, thereby enhancing brain function. On the other hand, we need healthy psychological habits. These include a positive attitude, good emotional management, effective stress coping, and rich social activities. These habits can help maintain the psychological health of the brain, and improve the brain's emotional regulation and self-control, thereby enhancing the brain's psychological function.

In addition, the health of the brain is also related to our age, gender, genes, and environment. For example, with the increase of age, the function of the brain may gradually decline. Some people's genes may make them more prone to mental illnesses. Environmental stress and stimuli may also affect brain health.

Overall, maintaining brain health is a complex process that requires our continuous effort. However, as long as we have the correct knowledge and strategies, we can certainly achieve this goal. After all, the health of our brain not only relates to mental health but also to our overall health and quality of life.



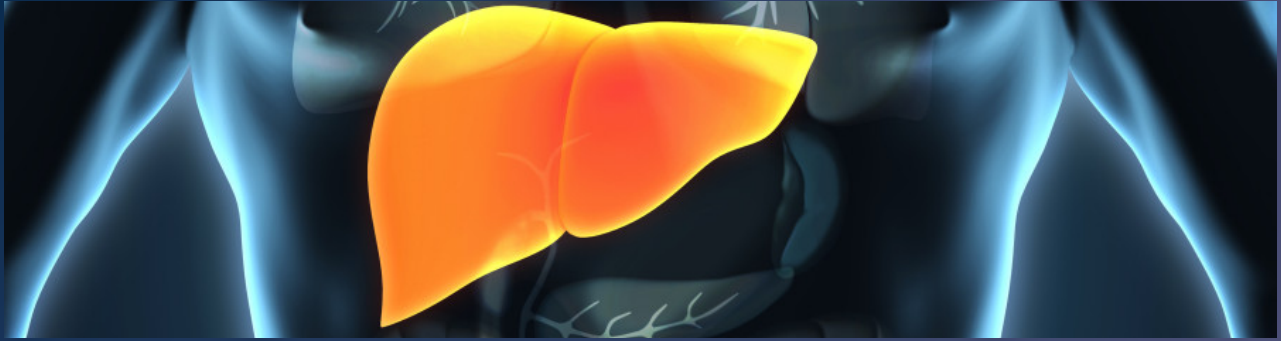


# Right to Clean water



**GENERAL ADVOCACY**

SECTION 3



# WHAT IS A *LIVER FLUKE*?

AUTHOR NAME Delia Lai

HRYA MAGAZINE

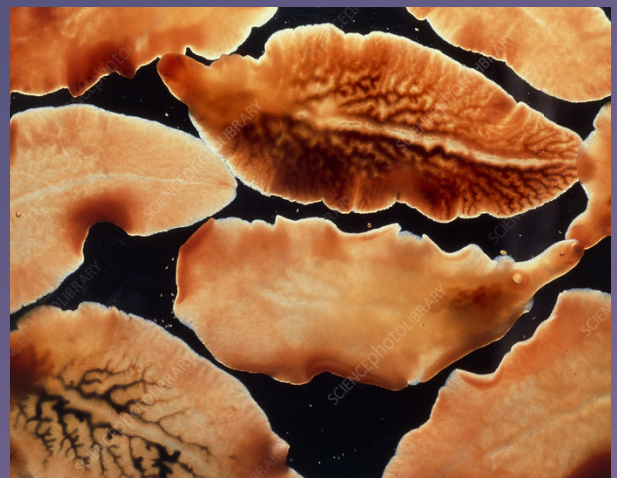
## HYGIENE MANAGEMENT

The importance of hygiene cannot be ignored in our daily lives. Maintaining good hygiene habits has a significant impact on both personal health and social public health. Good hygiene practices can prevent diseases and infections. Washing hands, keeping the body clean, and handling food properly all help to reduce the spread of germs and bacteria and reduce the risk of getting sick. By developing good hygiene practices, everyone can create a healthier and safer environment for themselves and those around them. Infection with liver fluke is often closely linked to sanitation, and lack of proper sanitation and hygiene education may increase the risk of liver fluke transmission. For example, lack of sanitation may lead to fecal contamination of water sources, making *Fasciola hepatica* infection more common.

## HEPATIC SCHISTOMIASIS IN HUMANS

Hepatic schistosomes are parasitic worms that live mainly in the human liver and bile ducts, but can also infect other organs. The life cycle of liver fluke includes two main hosts: humans and freshwater snails.

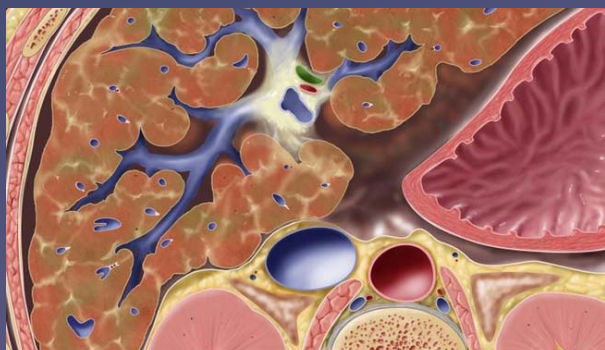
Adult liver flukes parasitize the liver and bile system of humans, producing mature eggs that are excreted in the feces of infected humans. These expelled eggs need to enter fresh water, where they are then ingested by infected freshwater snails. Inside the freshwater snail, the eggs develop into larval spirochetes (*trichinae*). The larvae leave the snail, swim into the water and, with the help of some aquatic plants or fish, re-enter humans or other mammals. Humans are usually infected with liver fluke by eating undercooked or unprocessed freshwater fish or other foods containing larval spirochaetes, or by direct contact with infected freshwater snails. Humans infected with liver fluke may initially have no noticeable symptoms. .



LIVER FLUKES



However, as the parasite matures and multiplies, an infected person may experience a range of symptoms, including abdominal pain, bloating, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, enlarged liver, and bile duct obstruction. In cases of long-term chronic infection, anemia, wasting and impaired liver function may also occur. Hepatic schistosome infection can be identified by fecal examination, which detects the presence of eggs. Once liver flukes enter the human body, they become parasitic within the hepatobiliary system and continue to grow and reproduce by ingesting bile from the host, leading to liver fluke disease. Hepatic schistosomiasis is a zoonotic disease that is mainly found in Asia, and is particularly prevalent in countries such as China, Korea and Vietnam. Hepatic schistosomiasis infection may cause digestive disorders such as cholecystitis and cholangitis, and in severe cases, may even lead to cirrhosis of the liver and biliary tract cancer. This includes ensuring that fish is well cooked, especially in areas where liver fluke is endemic. Drinking from safe water sources and observing personal and environmental hygiene are also important measures to prevent infection.



HEPATIC SCHISTOSOMIASIS

## PREVALENCE OF LIVER FLUKE

Hepatic schistosomiasis occurs mainly in a number of tropical and subtropical regions, especially in South-East Asia, southern China, the Korean peninsula, Japan, Taiwan and parts of Africa. These areas usually have lakes, rivers and irrigation systems suitable for the growth and development of liver fluke larvae. Specifically, the provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou, and Hunan in southern China are areas with a high incidence of liver fluke. Southeast Asian regions such as Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines and Indonesia also have high infection rates. Cases of hepatic schistosomiasis have also been reported in Japan, Korean Peninsula and Taiwan. Dietary habits, sources of drinking water and environmental conditions in these regions may increase people's risk of infection with liver fluke. For example, consumption of raw or inadequately cooked freshwater fish or shrimp, and the use of untreated contaminated water sources for drinking or irrigation of agricultural land may lead to infection.

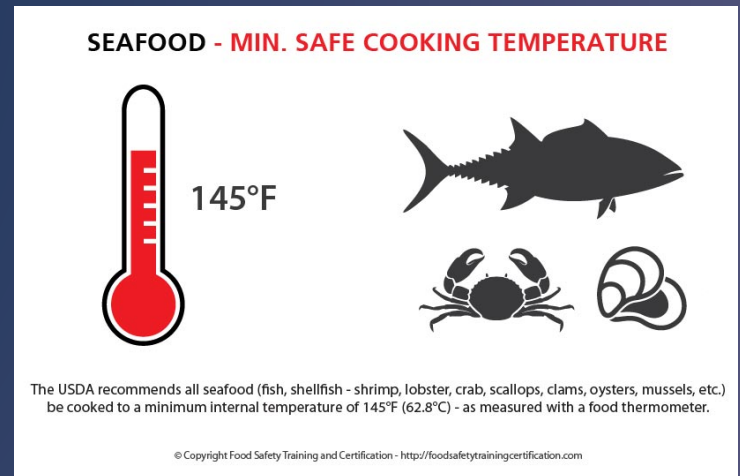
## TREATMENT OF LIVER FLUKE

Praziquantel is the main medication used for liver flukes, which kills both adult and larval worms, thereby reducing the condition. The exact dosage and course of treatment should be determined by your doctor and used as prescribed. During the course of treatment, your doctor may review the medication and re-treat as needed. When treating hepatic schistosomiasis, the doctor will develop an individualized treatment plan based on the patient's specific condition. This includes taking into account factors such as the patient's age, severity of the disease, and state of liver function to determine the most appropriate treatment strategy.

To prevent reinfection of liver fluke, patients should avoid consuming undercooked freshwater fish or shrimp and ensure that they drink safe water.

## IMPORTANT NOTES

Do not buy or use antiparasitic drugs on your own; they must be used under a doctor's supervision. If you suspect that you are infected with liver fluke, seek medical advice for diagnosis and treatment as soon as possible to prevent the condition from worsening. The best way to prevent liver fluke is to avoid eating undercooked or untreated freshwater fish and to maintain good hygiene practices. In the face of an infectious disease outbreak or epidemic, good hygiene practices can play a vital role in slowing down the spread of the disease and protecting more people from infection. At the same time, public health policies and education campaigns are important tools for ensuring the health and well-being of the entire community.



### PHOTO CREDITS:

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# ***Racial Discrimination***

*Author:* Delia Lai



## *Introduction*

Racial discrimination refers to unfair treatment or prejudice based on an individual's race or ethnic identity, such behavior or attitude that can have a broad negative impact on the individual and society, such discrimination may be a personal act, may also reflect institutional discrimination at the social, institutional or governmental level, involve negative judgment, stereotyping, degradation, discriminatory speech or discriminatory acts against one or more ethnic groups, is a violation of fundamental human rights and the principles of fairness and has a negative impact not only on individuals and groups who are discriminated, but also undermines the cohesion and stability of society as a whole.



## *Causes of Racial Discrimination*

Historical events such as racial conflicts, colonialism, slavery, etc. can leave a deep imprint on the memory of societies, leading some people to develop prejudice and hostility towards particular races. Cultural differences may lead to misconceptions and a lack of understanding of other races, which in turn may lead to discrimination. Ignorance of other cultures and a lack of education can also exacerbate the existence of racial discrimination. On the basis of ethnic background, certain cultures and traditions may reinforce prejudices against other races and view a particular race as superior or inferior, leading to discriminatory behaviors.



These stereotypes are often based on unfounded assumptions, inaccurate information, or traditional beliefs. Such prejudices may lead to discrimination and unfair treatment of particular races. Extreme views of religion and nationalism may incite hatred and hostility toward other races. Lack of understanding of different racial cultures and backgrounds may lead to misunderstanding and prejudice and increase the likelihood of racial discrimination. Inequalities existing in society and deficiencies in social structures may also lead to racial discrimination. Historical factors such as segregation, slavery, racism, and racial polarization have contributed to the persistence of discrimination and oppression against certain racial groups.

## The Emergence of Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination can be found across the globe, although it varies from region to region. Racial discrimination exists in various areas such as education, employment, housing, health care, law and social services. In the field of education, racial discrimination may affect students' academic achievement and opportunities. Inequalities in resources may exist in certain areas, resulting in a lower quality of education for students of particular races. Racial discrimination may manifest itself in the denial of equal work opportunities, the limitation or denial of educational resources, low-paying employment, the dissemination of racial prejudice and stereotypes, and physical assault and violence. These combined causes may result in restrictions on housing options and the inequitable distribution of resources to particular communities. The effects of racial discrimination on victims are far-reaching. It may also manifest itself in personal interactions, social media and public spaces in the form of insults, discriminatory remarks and attacks between racial groups. It causes psychological harm, erodes self-esteem and self-confidence and limits their development and growth. Racial discrimination also has a negative impact on society as a whole, undermining its harmony and equity and impeding its progress and development. It is a form of unfair treatment of individuals or groups of individuals simply because they belong to a particular race or ethnicity.







## Measures Against Racial Discrimination

In order to eliminate racial discrimination, we need to take proactive measures to raise public awareness and understanding of racial discrimination, promote education and publicity on multiculturalism, and foster social values of mutual respect and tolerance. Ensure equal employment opportunities, educational resources, and social services, establish and strengthen the anti-discrimination legal framework, formulate and implement anti-discrimination policies; and protect the rights, interests, and well-being of people who are discriminated against. Promote multicultural exchange and dialogue and foster mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation between races and ethnicities. Provide support and resources to enable people who have been discriminated against to access help, share experiences, and participate in social change and advocacy.



## Racial Discrimination Requires Concerted Efforts

While racial discrimination exists in many places, different regions may have different legal, policy and cultural responses to address and respond to it. International organizations, Governments, non-governmental organizations and all sectors of society are working to promote inclusiveness, justice and pluralism in order to eliminate racial discrimination and create equitable opportunities and conditions for all.

The elimination of racial discrimination requires the concerted efforts and sustained commitment of society as a whole. By promoting the social values of fairness, equality and inclusion, we can create a society free of racial discrimination, where everyone enjoys equal rights and dignity. At the same time, it also requires the joint efforts of the whole society, including the Government, educational institutions, the media, organizations and individuals, to eliminate racial discrimination and build an equal and inclusive society. Promoting an equal and just social environment is an important step towards eliminating racial discrimination.

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# PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

## HONG KONG BEAUTY PAGEANTS

Author: Chenxi Zhang

It is another year, and another episode of Miss Hong Kong. It comes silently, and it creeps away equally silently.

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For many born in the 21st century, we may only hear the lingering echoes of the once sensational variety show. For those in our parents' generation, it is an entire story altogether. They may even be familiar with the few household names that emerged out of the beauty pageant: Maggie Cheung, Michelle Reis, Ada Choi. Many of these female celebrities once dominated the screen of TVB. It was a wistful era where women were not defined by a singular set of beauty standards. We see confident women; independent women; intelligent women who may not have privileged upbringing, and they attend the pageant to have a shot at altering their destiny, by earning the



A photo taken of Maggie Cheung nominated for Miss Hong Kong

anticipated television contracts from TVB and entering the entertainment industry. Yet, the decline of the pageant has coincided with the fall of the Hong Kong's entertainment industry, and there's hardly any interest in the 2023 Miss Hong Kong despite the once revered status of the variety show. While Miss Hong Kong was an iconic symbol of Hong Kong's soft power and cultural influence in the last century, there are several reasons surrounding its declining popularity, which is a reflection of societal attitudes in Hong Kong.



. At first glance, you might assume she is one woman but in fact, they are three different women all recognized as timeless beauties.

While the beauty pageant does factor in other qualities of the contestants like their intelligence and charisma, it does derive much of its sensationalism for being known as a beauty contest.



Past contestants in Miss Hong Kong were often criticized for being too 'ugly', such as Chinese-Filipino-Spanish Kirsten Ashley[1], who has been likened to a Buddha statue, or the 2017 Miss Hong Kong winner Juliette Louie who was bullied for her protruding front teeth. In stark contrast, most of the Miss Hong Kong winners in the twentieth century were in their own respective leagues of beauty– Maggie Cheung for her grace, Michelle Reis for her striking appearance, challenging the boundaries of beauty.

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Yet, with the rise of plastic surgery over the last decade, the standards of beauty are increasingly more homogenized – small face, double eyelids, tall nose seems to be the norm for what constitutes as a typical East Asian beauty. This mold is so easily replicable, and even with outstanding cosmetic skills alone it's possible for one to be very beautiful. Simply put, there is no longer an exclusive quality to being good-looking, while it used to be once solely attributed to luck and the gene lottery. As such, a beauty pageant no longer has the appeal factor to viewers due to the dropping standards of beauty, therefore fallen out of favours from the general public as it fails to fulfil its role as a beauty pageant.

Of course, it is undeniable that the rise of contestants such as Kirsten Ashley whose very presence revolt against the 'sameness' of beauty standards is a breath of fresh air.



The before and after of plastic surgery to asian beauty standards

Criticisms aside, these women are a source of inspiration for many young ladies, serving as a real-life example that beauty cannot be defined within the realm of four walls. Furthermore, the low barriers to entry for Miss Hong Kong means that there's a greater diversity of female contestants who can participate in the pageant, implying a wider spectrum of ethnicities amongst the contestants. The 2020 Miss Hong Kong winner, Lisa Tse[2] is Eurasian – half Scottish, half Chinese, thereby standing out from the past winners of the pageant who are mostly monoracial. The diversification of Miss Hong Kong contestants celebrates the different types of beauties amongst Hong Kong women which are not restricted to traditional Asian beauty standards, hence pointing to some semblance of value in Miss Hong Kong.

To understand why Miss Hong Kong had been so electrifying for our parents' generation, it was important to understand what it stood for to these young contestants through the lens of the Hong Kong dream.

As one of the four Asian Tigers in the 20th century and a small city of rapid industrialisation, Hong Kong was a golden land for immigrants in search of a better life, or refugees fleeing war and social tensions. This meritocratic narrative – that if you work sufficiently hard enough, you could rise above and attain a better life – also dominated Hong Kong films. *Chungking Express* by Wong Kar Wai poignantly portrayed the zeitgeist of Hong Kong: its portrayal of the fast-paced life with the frantic camerawork, the isolation faced by each of the characters in the cavernous, vast city, as well as their working hard to achieve their big dreams. Likewise, Miss Hong Kong was also such an opportunity for young girls, as winners could gain direct access to the entertainment industry and rewrite their destiny. Indeed, most of them eventually emerged to be superstars, or to have married businessmen husbands[3]. While these young girls might not have the most privileged upbringing, Miss Hong Kong represented to them all the prospects of riches and glory which could bring about a 180 to their fate. Hence, the beauty pageant was not merely a casual form of entertainment as it is today, but a ticket to a better life.

Modern women are unfortunately quite different. With gender equality becoming more of a reality in the 21st century, women have much more opportunities to success than before,

therefore they can capitalize on a lot more of their personal qualities to fight for a better future. Beauty isn't the only asset that modern women possess. In fact, it is the cheapest, and the most unworthy one. Participating in beauty pageants are no longer the only way for a woman to alter her living prospects, and whether or not it can even bring a significant change is debatable. While the media coverage of the pageant is undeniable, beauty pageants no longer offer such dramatic transformations to the winners as compared to the past century, with Lisa Tse even claiming that her acting career with TVB was her lowest paying job. 2015 Miss Hong Kong winner Louisa Mak[4] also remarked that the pageant was only a 'physical means to celebrate beauty', hence her participation in the pageant was a means of self-expression. Needless to say, the pageant is no longer the high-stakes ticket it had been years back. It begins to offer less and mean much less, therefore leading to its dying popularity.

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Lastly, the rise of feminism entails that women are seen as individuals with vitality and spirit, and such a superficial contest like Miss Hong fails to capture the non-physical traits of women in a favorable light. . There has been much voices of dissent discrediting pageants Miss Hong Kong for objectifying women, given the mandatory swimsuit section for the



contestants in the preliminary stage. Miss Helen Yu[5], a female member of police watchdog criticises the pageant for making the contestants expose so much skin, asserting that it is not necessary. Furthermore, such events are also often put down for being degrading with its excessive focus on physical looks, projecting an unrealistic standard of beauty for young women. While Miss Hong Kong may brand itself to celebrate beauty and intelligence the same time, it is ridiculous to think that the audience

ART BY YARU CAO



watches Miss Hong Kong to look out for intelligent women when there are thousands of more renowned game shows testing the contestants' intelligence. No doubt the biggest attracting factor of Miss Hong Kong still is, and will always be its role as a beauty contest, and judging the contestants' worth based on their physical appearances. As John Galbraith once said, 'there is certainly no absolute standard of beauty, [which] makes its pursuit so interesting.' Indeed, the once revered beauty pageant is an interesting lens in which through we can scrutinise the issue of beauty standards for women in our modern society. While the pageant can never get back to the boon in the pre-internet age, it should adapt to the changing times if it wishes to maintain consistent viewership.

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# An Advocacy of The Right to Clean Water

Youlan Li  
07/09/2023

Water is considered a human right, but it's not explicitly recognized as a self-standing human right in international treaties. Every individual has the inherent entitlement to an adequate supply of clean, potable water that is available, sufficient, affordable, and suitable for personal and domestic uses. However, according to WHOlive, 2.1 billion people still lack clean water every day, which implies the severity of these vulnerable families lacking healthy water to drink and cook around the world. Another group of data from WHOlives suggests that 3.4 million people die each year from scarce and contaminated water sources. These facts all indicated our community hasn't completed adequate work to let everyone have access to clean and healthy water.

## WHAT DOES "WATER IS A HUMAN RIGHT" MEAN?

There are quite a few dimensions. Firstly, the quality and basic needs of water must be guaranteed, such as for consumption, cooking, drinking, cleaning, handwashing, bathing, approach to hygiene facilities, and sanitation. In addition to the quality, the water must meet the standards of safety, ensuring it's uncontaminated and away from any harmful substance. Water should never contain any substance that may pose a health threat to people. The third dimension of the water right is accessibility. Water must be physically accessible, such as within the house or close to the house. If the water is required to walk for a distance, then the individual is not enjoying the water right. It should also be economically accessible and affordable so that people can pay for uncontaminated water rather than drinking contaminated water due to the high fee. Finally, clean water must be accessible to everyone, including the more vulnerable and marginalized population of society.



## WHAT ARE OUR WAYS FORWARD?



A country's government must be the first one to take action to guarantee the rights to water and sanitation equally and without discrimination. All barriers to clean, uncontaminated water access must be overcome. Leaving no one behind is also the central promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A society can only attain optimal levels of public health, educational achievement, gender equity, and economic productivity when all of its members enjoy the right to clean water and sanitation. For example, if the right to clean water gets disrupted by insufficient uncontaminated water, people's right to health would be compromised. There's a higher risk for people to get infected by bacteria and viruses, which lead to various diseases or even death. In this case, the members of society aren't enjoying the right to clean water and health.

To conclude, respect for all human rights must be integrated into actual development plans for all sectors, at all levels. We can contribute to everyone's right to clean water by avoiding wasting water ourselves. If we all start doing so, there will be much more accessible water for us left in the world.

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# THE POWER OF HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY: UPHOLDING DIGNITY AND EQUALITY

Jenny Ma  
07/10/2023

## Enlightening Social Justice

Human rights advocacy has an important role in advocating social justice. This entails removing disparities in race, gender, and socioeconomic status, to guarantee that everyone within society can benefit from same opportunities and treatment equally. To make way for gender parity in the workforce, human rights activism has led to modifications of policies and raised awareness about wage discrepancies established by gender.

## Influencing Legal Reforms and Policy Changes

It is through human rights activism that major legal reforms and policy changes can be established to ensure the safety and promotion of such rights. The civil rights movement in the United States is a prime example of this; the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 are the result of organisations, activists, and individuals urging and following through on governmental laws and regulations to protect human rights standards.

## Holding Governments Accountable

The actions and policies of governing entities need to be held to account, and this is precisely what human rights activists strive to do. Through research, documentation, and lobbying, they expound on human rights violations; search for justice for victims; and demand that foreseen governmental obligations are fulfilled.

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Human rights advocacy is an essential instrument for safeguarding individual freedoms, guaranteeing social justice, and fostering equality—a necessary endeavor to build a more equitable and inclusive world. To delve deeper into the weighty significance of such advocacy, let us explore the impact it has on preserving individual liberties, facilitating social equity, and stimulating equality.

## Protecting Individual Freedoms

Advocates of human rights strive to safeguard these fundamental liberties. These freedoms include freedom of speech, expression, assembly, and religion—allowing individuals to live with dignity. Campaigns waged by activists have been instrumental in decriminalising homosexuality and permitting the LGBTQ+ community to express themselves freely and openly without suffering any discriminative persecution.



## Enhancing Equality

Additionally, human rights activism is concerned with empowering marginalised groups and eliminating discrimination. Working to push for the acceptance and promotion of diversity, advocates push for equal rights – despite race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. For example, due to many advocacy efforts regarding the rights of those with disabilities, it has become legally mandated for public spaces, transportation, and the workplace to provide accessible infrastructure to anyone who needs it, so they can actively take part in the society to their fullest ability.

## Raising Public Awareness

By elevating public awareness regarding human rights, activists, organisations, and citizens can collect support and instigate collective action to combat human rights violations. In terms of creating such awareness, multiple methods are used – including social media, public demonstrations, educational campaigns, and engaging with the media. For instance, due to the #MeToo movement, extensive conversations and policy reform concerning gender-based violence and workplace misconduct have arisen worldwide; the pressure carried by the public on governments has clearly far-reaching effects.

## The Actors of Human Rights Advocacy

Various parties have various functions at different levels to back and protect human rights – composing the whole of human rights activism. These groups are classified as international organisations, such as Human Rights Watch (HRW); domestic organisations, like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU); and professionals, including social workers, who works at the local level.

International organisations like HRW center their efforts on investigating and disclosing human rights violations and back governments to commit and defend human rights standards. Domestic organisations like the ACLU use human rights frameworks to campaign nationally, as well as litigate, execute policy advocacy, educate the public, and stir up grassroots mobilisation. At the grassroots level, especially social workers, observe the effects of laws or policies on the human rights of their clients, to spark positive change. These organisations collectively unite with the intention of protecting human rights and holding governments accountable.

Ultimately, human rights activism is vital for tending to individual liberties, enabling social justice, and promoting equality. Through advocacy, research, and public awareness initiatives, activists, organisations, and professionals strive to bring light to human rights breaches and urge governments to comply with their human rights responsibilities. This advocacy works to create a more equitable and inclusive society for all.

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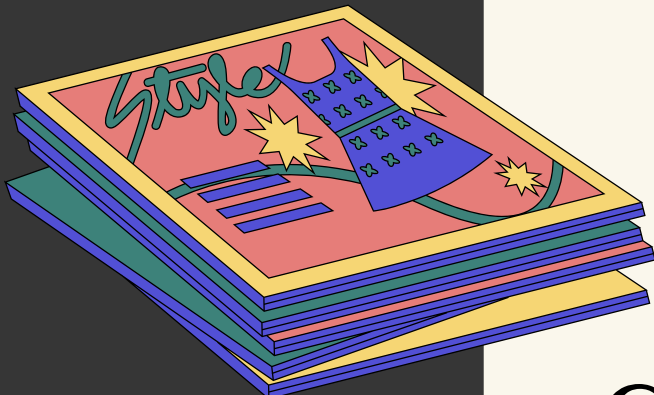
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