

Time to take action on filicides in Hong Kong

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To the Editor—We previously summarised cases involving filicide in Hong Kong between 2017 and 2018.¹ These cases involved children mostly aged <12 years and parents of both sexes with multi-dimensional causal factors.² Generally, it is crucial to understand the motivation of perpetrators to provide early assessment and intervention. Systematic collection of data on filicide could elucidate these motivations and bring new insights to clinical practice; however, few countries (eg, Australia, Canada) have an official registry on filicide. We recommend setting up an official filicide registry in Hong Kong to investigate the risk factors associated with filicide in Hong Kong in order to inform early assessment and intervention as well as policy decisions. The Comprehensive Child Development Service under Hospital Authority, Department of Health, Social Welfare Department, Education Bureau and Labour and Welfare Bureau aims to identify needs of at-risk children and families in Hong Kong.³

Moreover, depression, related to loneliness, helplessness, or hopelessness, is one psychological condition present in those who committed filicides.^{2,4} Perpetrators might exhibit help-seeking behaviour or filicidal tendencies. Unfortunately, mental health support in Hong Kong is lacking, especially in terms of caregiver support, although it is no substitute for a strong social support network.¹ Physicians may have the opportunity to prevent filicide if these warning signs can be detected.⁵ We recommend development of a multi-dimensional and systematic screening tool to help healthcare professionals in identifying potential cases for filicide risk.¹ Physicians, especially psychiatrists, and other healthcare and social service professionals could seize the opportunity to prevent filicide if early warning signs can be identified.⁵

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the drafting of the letter and critical revision for important intellectual content. All authors approved the final version for publication and take responsibility for its accuracy and integrity.

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