

Early treatment crucial in mental illness

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IT TOOK more than 20 years before Mr Daren Lauchengco got proper treatment for his bipolar disorder.

By then, he had lost many productive years of his life.

The father of two, now a 39-year-old freelance illustrator, is an example of how crucial early intervention is for people with mental illness.

“Many people delay seeking treatment for their conditions because of stigma and ignorance,” said Ms Porsche Poh, founder of Silver Ribbon, a movement for mentally ill patients. “But early intervention has a great role in making sure that they get a chance of cure and ability to integrate into society.”

The first Mental Health Carnival, Stamp out Stigma, held yesterday at the Youth Park, is a move to drive this message.

As a “fun and different” approach, it is meant to reach out to the public, especially young Singaporeans, so that the misconceptions surrounding mental illness can be addressed, said Ms Poh.

Mr Yeo Guat Kwang, MP for Aljunied GRC, who graced the event, called for more proactive steps to help mental patients.

“Our present system is too reactive and there is too much focus on treatment, so by the time people seek help it is too late. But now with more support groups, we can better have proactive steps and early intervention.” — SHERALYN TAY