

MORE STRESSED-OUT YOUNGSTERS SEEK HELP

MORE children and teenagers are under stress and seeking professional help for psychological conditions, some practitioners in the field said.

At the Child Guidance Clinic at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH), for example, the number of patients went up from between 2,000 and 2,500 children and adolescents eight years ago, to 3,000 patients last year.

However, Dr Ong Say How, the deputy chief of the department of child and adolescent psychiatry at the IMH, pointed out that the increase does not necessarily indicate an increased incidence of mental disorders.

"Some conditions are related to responses to stress in schools and homes, and not strictly mental disorders per se," he said.

He noted that most of these cases involve children who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), stress-related disorders, emotional disorders and conduct disorders.

Miss Porsche Poh, the executive director of the Tze Hng Wellness Studio, said that since her centre opened last October, she has seen more than 11 cases of people aged between 15 and 30.

One of them was a teen who was diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder with psychotic symptoms, and he was on medication.

The mother said he defecated around their flat.

Miss Poh told her to go back to his psychiatrist.

She noted: "Some parents are

reluctant to take their children directly to the IMH or private psychiatrists because of the stigma involved."

At Dr Lionel Lim's clinic, 40 per cent of his patients comprise children and adolescents. He has also seen 2-year-olds.

He said: "Parents these days are more educated... They are more exposed to the idea of seeking help for their children's psychological issues.

Dr Adrian Wang, 41, a psychiatrist in private practice, sees two to three more new young patients a month as compared to last year.

He said: "Usually, the parents take their children here. There are also secondary and junior college students with childhood depression."