Unforgettable Restaurant: helping older people who are living with disability and dementia return to society

Ping Jiang,1 Ting Xu,2 Chen Zhang,1 Jinghong Chen,3 Tao Wang4,5

On 25 January 2021, a special restaurant named the ‘Unforgettable Restaurant’ was opened in a prime locality of Shanghai, China; it emerged from a popular publicly broadcast welfare TV programme of the same name.1 This restaurant’s waiters are older patients with cognitive impairment, and the cumulative number of views for the programme has now exceeded 1.4 billion online.2 3 After the show was broadcast for two consecutive years, the filming party decided to open the restaurant officially, and the waiting duties were assumed by older people living with disability and dementia. The restaurant’s goal is to change Chinese society’s inherent views on the issues of disability and dementia and to remind the public to focus on a series of issues including the reintegration of older people living with disability and dementia to re-serve others and to rebuild public evaluations regarding them.

By the end of 2019, in China, the number of older people living with disability and dementia reached 50 million.4 Figure 1 shows the prevalence of disability for activities of daily living among Chinese people aged 60 years and above.4 Studies have also specifically pointed out that, among all the ways to help groups with disability and dementia, providing job opportunities, continuing education opportunities and even providing art exhibition opportunities are the most important.5 6 Many people believe that once a person is affected by disability and dementia, all their social functions will be lost, and they will never be able to return to society.7 This view, which is propagated by society as well as families, tends to create dislike, discrimination and abandonment towards older people who are living with disability and dementia; it also causes very poor self-worth among them.8

The opening of the ‘Unforgettable Restaurant’ is a pioneering initiative. Currently, nearly 10 older people living with disability and dementia are working in this restaurant, and they remain mainly in charge of ordering and serving. Figure 2 shows how these special waiters’ social service communication activities, including willingness to participate, activity participation, language expression...
A total of six parts were included in the questionnaire: willingness to attend activities, attention in activities, expression ability, ability to communicate with others, degree of participation and enjoyment of the process of activities. The elderly waiters’ performances in the activities were quantitatively evaluated by trained staff using a questionnaire. The data were issued, collected and filled out by specially trained and qualified staff. All data entries were reviewed by a dedicated designated member of the research team to ensure the accuracy of the findings.

**Author affiliations**

Department of Biochemistry and Psychopharmacology, Shanghai Mental Health Center, School of Medicine, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China

Department of Nursing Innovation and Entrepreneurship, School of Nursing and Health Management, Shanghai University of Medicine and Health Sciences, Shanghai, China

Shanghai Key Laboratory of Psychotic Disorders, Shanghai Mental Health Center, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, School of Medicine, Shanghai, China

Department of Orthopaedics and Traumatolog, Shanghai East Hospital, School of Medicine, Tongji University, Shanghai, China

Institute of Emergency Management and Disaster Public Opinion, School of Arts and Media, Tongji University, Shanghai, China

**Contributors** PJ, JHC and TW participated in the design of the article. PJ, TX, CZ, JHC and TW were involved in the induction and summary of meaning. TX collected the data, PJ drafted the manuscript and all authors revised the manuscript critically for important intellectual content. The authors are responsible for the paper's data.

**Funding** This work was supported by National Social Science Fund Project (18BGL242); Project of the Key Discipline Construction, 3-Year Initiative Plan for Public Health Action in Shanghai(GW-10.1-XX18, GW-10.1-XX21); Teacher Train and Progress Project of Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine (JFXM201808); Shanghai Mental Health Center Project (2016-Y1-16); China Hospital Development Research Institute Hospital Management Construction Project of Shanghai Jiao Tong University (CHDI-2018-A-23); Shanghai Jiao Tong University Translational Medicine Interdisciplinary Research Fund (Z201808NB18); Young and Middle-aged Teachers Study Abroad Programme of Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine; Wang Kuancheng Medical Award Fund Project of Shanghai Jiao Tong University; Shanghai University of Medicine and Health Sciences Project (SSF-21-02-13).

**Competing interests** None declared.

**Patient consent for publication** Not applicable.

**Ethics approval** This study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of the Shanghai Mental Health Center (IORG Number: IOR0002202. FWA Number:FWA00003065). The Institutional Ethics Committee, Shanghai Mental Health Center also approved the consent procedure. Participants gave informed consent to participate in the study before taking part.

**Provenance and peer review** Commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

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**REFERENCES**


Dr Ping Jiang obtained her PhD from the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, the Second Military University, China in 2005. She is currently a researcher at the Department of Biochemistry and Psychopharmacology, Shanghai Mental Health Center, China, where she has worked since 2010. Her main research interests include medical communication and TDM of antipsychotic.

Dr Ting Xu obtained her PhD from the Department of Hospital Management, Antai College of Economics and Management, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China in 2015. She is currently an assistant professor at the Department of Nursing Innovation and Entrepreneurship, School of Nursing and Health Management, Shanghai University of Medicine and Health Sciences, China, where she has worked since 2018. She is also the leader of Project ‘Volunteer at the “Unforgettable Restaurant” Great Health Project Management Demonstration Base’. Her main research interests include aged care and emergency management.