### PUBLIC HEALTH

# Introduction

Although the prevalence of infectious disease continues to be a public health concern in China,¹ increasing rates of non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes,² chronic kidney disease,³ and mental health conditions⁴ pose challenges to Chinese policymakers and government officials. With the prior round of health care reform in China focused on expanding health insurance coverage,⁵ the State Council issued a new five-year (2015–2020) plan in March 2015 that addresses ongoing challenges in accessing medical care.⁶ These include the uneven distribution of health care resources between rural and urban areas,⁻ the high cost of medical treatment,⁶ and public hospitals that reportedly have given priority to profits over patient needs.⁶

### CONCERNS OVER THE ORGAN DONATION SYSTEM

China faces a significant public health problem in meeting the needs of individuals who need organ transplants, a problem exacerbated by an organ donation system still at an early stage of development. The disparity between supply and demand for organ transplants in China is large, with estimates of one million people in need of organ transplants, among whom 300,000 are medically eligible for them, according to a March 2015 report in Caixin. Approximately 10,000 transplants have been performed annually in recent years, 2 relying heavily on organs harvested from executed prisoners. A top Chinese health official acknowledged international concerns and, since at least 2012, has stated repeatedly that the Chinese government would phase out the country's dependence on executed prisoners as a source of organs for transplant.

State-run media reported the end of harvesting organs from executed prisoners with a move to a fully voluntary organ donation system in January 2015.<sup>15</sup> Death row prisoners, however, remain "among the qualified candidates for donations, but their organs will be registered in the computerized system instead of being used for private trades." <sup>16</sup> International medical professionals and human rights advocates raised doubts about the "voluntary" nature of such donations, and emphasized that the use of prisoners' organs violates international ethical standards in transplantation. <sup>17</sup>

### Implementation of the PRC Mental Health Law

Forcibly committing individuals without mental illness to psychiatric facilities (bei jingshenbing), including "government critics" and petitioners with "grievances against officials," reportedly continued during the Commission's 2015 reporting year <sup>18</sup> despite the PRC Mental Health Law's (MHL) provisions to prevent such abuse. <sup>19</sup> Microblogger Shi Genyuan <sup>20</sup> and activist Song Zaimin <sup>21</sup> were released from forcible hospitalization in October and November 2014, respectively. The Chinese human rights organization Civil Rights & Livelihood Watch also documented cases of forced commitment before major political meetings this past year. <sup>22</sup>

The Chinese government at central and local levels made efforts to strengthen implementation of the MHL. In November 2014, Shanghai municipality issued mental health regulations that updated municipal regulations from 2001, thus issuing the first local mental health regulations in China since the MHL came into effect in 2013.<sup>23</sup> Beijing municipality and Hangzhou municipality, Zhejiang province, reportedly considered whether to revise regulations that pre-date the MHL.<sup>24</sup> In June 2015, the State Council issued a five-year work plan on mental health that would expand access to treatment and services, increase the number of mental health professionals and organizations providing services, and offer more public outreach on mental health, among other aims.<sup>25</sup>

According to Chinese experts, most local regulations do not yet have "effective oversight and review mechanisms for involuntary admission, clear time limitation [sic] for such admissions, and specific discharge procedures," due, in part, to difficulties in balancing medical needs and legal protections, as well as community safety concerns and the rights of individuals with mental illness.<sup>26</sup> For example, Shanghai's regulations maintain a limit of 72 hours for initial diagnosis in cases of involuntary admission,<sup>27</sup> whereas the MHL lacks a specific timeframe,<sup>28</sup> leaving open the potential for an unlimited period of commitment. The delimited time period was a feature of Shanghai's earlier mental health regulations (2001)<sup>29</sup> and is in keeping with international standards.30 The non-governmental organization Chinese Human Rights Defenders raised concerns during this reporting year that the MHL leaves persons subjected to involuntary hospitalization for mental illness "vulnerable to human rights violations," including violating provisions in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).<sup>31</sup> Articles 12 and 14 of the CRPD, for example, stipulate people with psychosocial disabilities shall "enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others" and "enjoy the right to liberty and security of person." <sup>32</sup>

The broad rights and responsibilities of guardians of persons with mental illness came into focus in April 2015 when a plaintiff in Shanghai lost a lawsuit for deprivation of liberty against his guardian and a psychiatric facility in a case reported to be the first lawsuit under the MHL.<sup>33</sup> The plaintiff in the Shanghai case spent more than 12 years involuntarily committed to a psychiatric facility even though his illness reportedly was under control.<sup>34</sup> In cases of involuntary commitment, patients may not discharge themselves on their own recognizance.<sup>35</sup> Despite efforts by the psychiatric facility to facilitate the plaintiff's release, his guardian reportedly claimed he was unable to care for the plaintiff and refused to authorize discharge.<sup>36</sup> One commentator noted weak protocols at psychiatric hospitals and the courts' "lack [of] authority" to determine legal relief were factors in the plaintiff's case.<sup>37</sup>

## Public Health Advocacy

Although the Chinese government encouraged the development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide public health and social welfare services, <sup>38</sup> the government's sanction of service provision did not extend to non-governmental advocacy it deemed to be politically sensitive. <sup>39</sup> Chinese officials harassed public health

advocates, for example, by preventing the HIV/AIDS advocate Wang Qiuyun from traveling to Geneva, Switzerland, in October 2014 to attend a UN conference 40 and detaining anti-health discrimination advocates Guo Bin and Yang Zhanqing in June 2015.41 In March 2015, public security authorities from Beijing municipality raided the Beijing Yirenping Center, an NGO that advocates for employment equality and anti-discrimination for persons with infectious diseases and disabilities.42 [For further information on the harassment of Yirenping during this reporting year, see Section III—Civil Society.]

Barriers in access to justice in cases of employment discrimination based on health conditions <sup>43</sup> include difficulties in filing cases, <sup>44</sup> relying on mediation over adjudication, <sup>45</sup> and financial burdens. <sup>46</sup> Chinese media reported on individual and group health advocacy during this reporting year, including these examples:

- A woman who was denied employment in Chengdu municipality, Sichuan province, because a pre-employment physical exam revealed she carried Hepatitis B, brought her case to court in December 2014.<sup>47</sup>
- Two HIV-positive people whose discrimination cases had been rejected by local courts in Guizhou province reportedly advocated for their right to sue in a November 2014 letter to the president of the Supreme People's Court.<sup>48</sup>
- In February 2015, plaintiffs in six AIDS-related employment discrimination cases wrote to the All-China Federation of Trade Unions <sup>49</sup> to call on employers, particularly government and public institutions, to discontinue use of discriminatory physical eligibility standards when hiring.<sup>50</sup>

#### Notes to Section II—Public Health

<sup>1</sup>See, e.g., Laurie Garrett, Council on Foreign Relations, "The Year of the Flu," 4 February 15; Gabriel Domínguez, "WHO: 'China Is Witnessing an Evolving HIV Epidemic," Deutsche Welle, 3 December 14; Cesar Chelala, "Tuberculosis Showing a Resurgence in China," Japan

Times, 30 March 15.

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3 Luxia Zhang, Fang Wang et al., "Prevalence of Chronic Kidney Disease in China: A Cross-Sectional Survey," Lancet, Vol. 379, No. 9818, 3 March 12.

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5 David Blumenthal and William Hsiao, "International Health Care Systems: Lessons From

the East—China's Rapidly Evolving Health Care System," New England Journal of Medicine, Vol. 372, No. 14, 2 April 15.

<sup>6</sup>State Council General Office, "National Medical and Health Services System Plan (2015–

2020)" [Quanguo yiliao weisheng fuwu tixi guihua gangyao], 6 March 15.

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<sup>9</sup>Chou Yi et al., "Health Insurance Reform, Clinical Care, and 'Public' Hospitals—Delegates Look at Three Major Directions of Deepening China's Health Care Reforms" [Yibao gaige, fenji zhenliao, "gongyi" yiyuan—daibiao weiyuan jujiao woguo shenhua yigai san da fangxiangl, Xinhua, 11 March 15.

<sup>10</sup> Olivia Geng and Fanfan Wang, "China Sheds Light on Organ Donor Program," Wall Street Journal, China Real Time Report (blog), 12 March 15; Jia Peng, "Dialogue: Huang Jiefu: Two Months Since the Use of Executed Prisoners' Organs Stopped, Public Donates 937 Organs" [Duihua: huang jiefu: siqiu qiguan tingyong liangyue gongmin juan 937 ge qiguan], Beijing News, 6 March 15.

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Shortage" [Huang jiefu: tingyong siqiu qiguan buhui yinqi duanque], Caixin, 11 March 15.

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<sup>27</sup>Shanghai Municipal People's Congress, Shanghai Municipality Mental Health Regulations [Shanghai shi jingshen weisheng tiaoli], issued 20 November 14, effective 1 March 15, art. 32. Article 32 of the Shanghai regulations limits emergency observation to 72 hours after which dis-

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<sup>29</sup> Shanghai Municipality Mental Health Regulations [Shanghai shi jingshen weisheng tiaoli],

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32 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 61/106 of 13 December 06, entry into force 3 May 08, arts. 12, 14. See also Chinese Human Rights Defenders, "The Darkest Corners': Abuses of Involuntary Psychiatric Commitment in China," August 2012, 13.

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<sup>38</sup>Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, Decision on Certain Major Issues Regarding Comprehensively Deepening Reforms [Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu quanmian shenhua gaige ruogan zhongda wenti de jueding], issued 12 November 13, sec. 13(48); Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Civil Affairs, and State Administration of Industry and Commerce, Government Service Procurement Management Measures (Interim) [Zhengfu goumai fuwu guanli banfa (zhanxing)], issued 15 December 14, effective 1 January 15, art. 14(1-2).

<sup>39</sup>Andrew Jacobs and Chris Buckley, "In China, Civic Groups' Freedom, and Followers, Are Vanishing," New York Times, 26 February 15.

<sup>40</sup>Jess Macy Yu, "Chinese AIDS Activist Says She Was Kept From U.N. Conference," New York Times, Sinosphere (blog), 23 October 14; Simon Denyer, "China Bars AIDS Activist From Traveling Despite Talk of Ending Discrimination," Washington Post, 23 October 14.

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<sup>44</sup>Shao Xi, "Guizhou Again Refuses Case-Filing of AIDS Employment Discrimination, Plaintiff Appeals" [Guizhou zai ju aizi jiuye qishi li'an yuangao shangsu], Caixin, 6 November 14; "Rule of Law News: Guizhou Allows Filing of HIV/AIDS Employment Discrimination Case for the First Time" [Fazhi xixun: guizhou shouci shouli aizi jiuye qishi an], New Citizens Movement

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(blog), 27 January 15.

<sup>49</sup> Wan Jing, "Litigants Recommend ACFTU Pay Attention to AIDS-Based Employment Discrimination" [Dangshiren jianyi quanzong guanzhu aizi jiuye qishi], Legal Daily, 3 February 15. See also Dong Jun, "ACFTU: Employer Discrimination a Prominent Problem" [Quanzong: yongren danwei jiuye qishi wenti tuchu], Xinhua, 2 February 15. An ACTFU official noted health and disability cases among typical cases of employment discrimination.

<sup>50</sup> Wan Jing, "Litigants Recommend ACFTU Pay Attention to AIDS-Based Employment Discrimination" [Dangshiren jianyi quanzong guanzhu aizi jiuye qishi], Legal Daily, 3 February 15. See also LGBTRights, "Plaintiffs in Six AIDS Discrimination Cases Name the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, How About It?" [Aizi qishi liu yuangao dianming zhonghua quanguo zonggong hui, yue ma?], Aiweibang, 5 February 15.