

MEDIA RELEASE

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IMH rolls out the second Well-being of Singapore Elderly study to establish the latest prevalence and incidence of dementia and depression in elderly residents

1. The Institute of Mental Health (IMH) is embarking on the second Well-Being of the Singapore Elderly (WiSE) study to track the changing trends in the prevalence of dementia and depression in Singapore. The first study conducted in 2013 found a prevalence of 10% (1 in 10) for dementia and 3.7% (1 in 27) for depression¹ among adults aged 60 and above.
2. This second study will also gather data on the incidence (number of new cases since the first study in 2013), as well as examine factors associated with dementia and depression among adults aged 60 and above here. In addition, it will shed light on the caregiver burden, treatment gap (proportion of people who have a disorder but did not receive treatment for it), healthcare utilisation and economic cost of dementia and depression. Data from this study will guide future policies and resource planning to tackle dementia and depression, to better prepare for the ageing population.
3. Collection of data for the study will begin in March 2022 and will continue through till July 2023 with an expected 6,000 participants in total. It will involve 3,000 elderly participants, of whom 2,000 are randomly selected and 1,000 are from the first WiSE study. The other 3,000 participants will be family members and caregivers nominated by the elderly participants to act as informants. Trained interviewers will go through a series of questionnaires and assessments with the participants and caregivers face-to-face to determine the cognitive and physical health of older adults. The interviews with family members and caregivers will cover areas such as care-burden as well as positive aspects of caregiving.
4. The nationwide study is funded by the Ministry of Health. The multidisciplinary research team involved in this study is led by Prof Chong Siow Ann, Senior Consultant, IMH, and A/Prof Mythily Subramaniam, Assistant Chairman Medical Board (Research), IMH. The team also includes clinicians and experts from IMH, MOH, Changi General Hospital, National University of Singapore, King's College London, and Greenwich University, London.

¹ The first WiSE study reported a dementia prevalence of 10%, corresponding to 51,934 older adults in Singapore. For depression, it was 3.7%, corresponding to 20,938 older adults with depression in the past month prior to the survey.

5. “Dementia and depression are common afflictions in the elderly and each has a complex interaction with the other,” said Prof Chong Siow Ann, the Principal Investigator of the study. “As our population ages, the number of elderly with both these conditions would also increase with the inevitable consequences in healthcare costs and quality of life. This would mean a greater burden of care, loss of economic productivity, and distress and suffering among those affected and their family members as well.”
6. He added, “This time, we are going beyond prevalence to examine the incidence rate, which is the number of cases that will emerge with time. This will enable us to examine factors that predispose, accelerate, and exacerbate dementia and depression, and as well as factors that might be protective. It would also give us some insights on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the elderly. Understanding risk factors, some of which may be modifiable, and determining protective factors can have the consequential effect of ‘bending the curve’ of these two devastating conditions.”
7. Dr Ng Li Ling, Senior Consultant, Department of Psychological Medicine, Changi General Hospital, and a co-investigator in the study said, “Issues identified from the first WiSE study such as the treatment gap and the care burden of dementia are key findings of deep concern in the face of our ageing population. Caring for people with dementia during the pandemic has increased the complexity of the situation, and added stress on caregivers. I believe that the second WiSE study is a step towards strengthening the network of services to improve the health and quality of life of both older adults and their caregivers.”

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About the Institute of Mental Health (IMH)

The Institute of Mental Health (IMH), a member of the National Healthcare Group, is the only tertiary psychiatric care institution in Singapore. Located on the sprawling 23-hectare campus of Buangkok Green Medical Park in the north-eastern part of Singapore, IMH offers a multidisciplinary and comprehensive range of psychiatric, rehabilitative and therapy services in hospital-based and community-based settings. The 2,000-bedded hospital aims to meet the needs of three groups of patients – children and adolescents (aged below 19 years), adults and the elderly. Besides providing clinical services, IMH also leads in mental health research and training the next generation of mental health professionals in Singapore. For more information, please visit www.imh.com.sg or www.facebook.com/imh.singapore.

Annex A

Researchers involved in the second Well-being of Singapore Elderly study

Principal Investigator:

- Prof Chong Siow Ann, Institute of Mental Health

Site-Principal Investigators:

- A/Prof Rathi Mahendran, National University of Singapore
- Dr Ng Li Ling, Changi General Hospital

Co-Investigators:

- A/Prof Mythily Subramaniam, Institute of Mental Health
- Dr Chow Wai Leng, Ministry of Health
- Dr Tey Su Hui Jeannie, Ministry of Health
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- Mr Chua Boon Yiang, Institute of Mental Health
- Ms Janhavi Vaingankar, Institute of Mental Health
- Dr Harish Magadi, Institute of Mental Health
- Prof Martin Prince, King's College London
- Prof Paul McCrone, Greenwich University, London