

MEDIA RELEASE

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Nationwide study on connection between positive mental health and physical health to improve wellness in Singapore

1. With the highest median ages, longest life expectancy rates and among the lowest fertility rates in the region, Singapore is grappling with the challenges of a rapidly ageing population, compounded by the rising prevalence of chronic diseases including diabetes. As life expectancy increases, the number of Singaporeans who need to manage chronic diseases and complications for a longer period of their later adulthood looks set to rise.
2. With that in mind, the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and the National University of Singapore's Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health (SSHSPH) are jointly embarking on a first of its kind, nationwide study on the connection between the sense of well-being and physical health in the adult Singapore population.
3. Known as the "Singapore Wellness Study", the objective is to better understand different aspects of "wellness" in the local population and the factors which enhance "wellness".
4. Some 10,000 participants of the SSHSPH's Singapore Population Health Studies - Multiethnic Cohort recruited about five years ago will participate in a follow-up examination, which will include interviews and physical examinations. In addition to lifestyle and medical history, the interviews will also assess different aspects of "wellness", including physical health, emotional health, stress and resilience, adapted from a questionnaire developed by the Stanford Prevention Research Center's international observational and interventional study, The Wellness Living Laboratory (WELL), for the local population (Refer to **Annex 3** for more information on WELL). The study's researchers will be able to conduct international comparisons as similar

measurements will be documented in California, China and Taiwan. The study will be funded by SSHSPH's Population Health Metrics and Analytics programme.

5. In the past, most studies focused on understanding the biological risk factors for diseases. However, mental health and wellness are also of key importance as they can affect future disease risk as well as managing and coping with age-related chronic diseases. As this is an integral part of health, it is critical to understand the distribution and different aspects of "wellness" and the respective determinants in the Singapore population.
6. In an earlier joint pilot Singapore Health 2 Study, both IMH and SSHSPH explored the relationship between increased level of physical activity and positive mental health. As anticipated, a very high level of physical activity increases positive mental health. The unexpected result however was that moderate and light physical activity also contributes to positive mental health. The Singapore Wellness Study will thus also allow researchers to integrate the prior findings for further study.
7. IMH and SSHSPH will collaborate on the study design, data analysis, interpretation and reporting of results. IMH will take the lead on adapting the "wellness" instrument alongside SSHSPH for the study.
8. On the significance of this study, Prof Chong Siow Ann, Vice Chairman, Medical Board (Research), IMH, said, "The Programme for Mental Health Policy Studies of IMH has extensive experience and expertise in the conduct of large scale studies that examine various aspects of mental health in the Singapore population while SSHSPH has strong expertise in lifestyle and molecular epidemiology and the conduct of large prospective epidemiological studies. With these complementary expertise and resources, this collaboration will create an effective platform to do those relevant important studies that will have benefits for our population."
9. Prof Chia Kee Seng, Dean, NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, commented, "Positive mental health is a very interesting and important concept. It has a direct impact on the quality of life. A person may be physically unwell but is well because he has control over the management of his illness and acceptance of the disease process. He may be physically sick but mentally at peace and is resilient. He continues to contribute to society. SSHSPH has many years of experience in

conducting population based studies on diseases. We are excited to partner with IMH in this new study into health, rather than illness.”

10. The study’s principal investigator and SSHSPH’s Epidemiology Domain Leader, Assoc Prof Rob van Dam, added, “Previous collaborations between SSHSPH and IMH highlighted the importance of expertise from both institutions in conducting national level epidemiological studies of lifestyle, physical and mental health. In the future, we can also collaborate on intervention studies that use this holistic approach to improve the health of Singaporeans.”
11. Assoc Prof Mythily Subramaniam, Director, Research Division, IMH, and co-investigator said, “The interaction and co-relation between mental and physical health cannot be overlooked as physical health issues contribute to premature deaths in those with mental health conditions. A systematic and detailed study of the wellness of the local population can help provide insights to address key problems and proactively initiate preventive measures. ”
12. The survey will take place over a four-year period from its launch and is expected to be completed by 2021. Findings from the Singapore Wellness Study will help inform the development of behavioural modifications and interventions to improve the positive mental health of Singaporeans, in addition to physical health.
13. This study would be the first of subsequent research collaborations between both IMH and SSHSPH, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed on 23 May 2017, which combines both institutions’ respective research strengths to provide insights and strategies for future workplace and community health interventions, with greater emphasis on well-being and positive mental health.

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About 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 25-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 2010-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.

About Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health (SSHSPH)

As Singapore's first and only full-fledged public health tertiary education institution, the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, National University of Singapore, builds upon more than 60 years of experience in research, training and practice to continually foster healthier communities in Singapore and the region through its translational cross-disciplinary research work on cohort studies and lifecourse epidemiology, infectious disease research, health technology assessments, health promotion, workplace health

and safety, health systems evaluation and health services research, to impact public health programmes and policies.

The School actively collaborates with many partners including the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Karolinska Institutet, Harvard School of Public Health and University of Michigan School of Public Health. The Master of Public Health (MPH) degree, the School's flagship programme, attracts students from a wide range of disciplines from within Singapore and throughout the region.

SSHSPH is also a member of the National University Health System (NUHS), the first academic medical centre in Singapore. As part of NUHS, SSHSPH works closely with the National University Hospital in hospital-based health services and primary care research. For more information, please visit www.sph.nus.edu.sg.

Researchers Involved in the Singapore Wellness Study:

Principal Investigator:

- Associate Prof Rob **VAN DAM**, Domain Leader, Epidemiology Domain, NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health

Co-Investigators:

- Associate Prof Mythily **SUBRAMANIAM**, Director, Research Division, Institute of Mental Health
- Ms Janhavi **VAINGANKAR**, Assistant Director, Research Division, Institute of Mental Health
- Associate Professor **LUO** Nan, Deputy Domain Leader, Health Systems and Behavioural Sciences Domain, NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health
- Dr **WEE** Hwee Lin, Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacy, NUS Faculty of Science and NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health

ENGLISH-CHINESE GLOSSARY

Professor Chong Siow Ann Vice Chairman, Medical Board (Research) Senior Consultant, Research Division & Department of Early Psychosis Intervention Institute of Mental Health	莊紹安临床教授 医疗委员会副主席(研究) 心理卫生学院研究部及初期治疗 错乱症治疗科高级专科顾问
Associate Professor Mythily Subramaniam Director, Research Division, Institute of Mental Health	Mythily Subramaniam 副教授 心理卫生学院研究部主任
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Institute of Mental Health	心理卫生学院
NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health	新加坡国立大学苏瑞福公共卫生 学院
Singapore Wellness Study	新加坡身心健康研究

About The Stanford Prevention Research Center's Wellness Living Laboratory (WELL)

The Wellness Living Laboratory (WELL) is an international observational and interventional study designed by the Stanford Prevention Research Center, which aims to improve the health and well-being of whole populations by identifying the factors that help people maintain health and wellness.

Launched on 12 September 2016, it aims to enroll at least 10,000 participants from the U.S., China and Taiwan. Researchers will collect health and wellness data and test behavioural modifications and other interventions that help people improve their health and wellness. Such interventions might include improving social, neighbourhood and policy environments to support health and wellness, as well as finding ways to encourage people to quit smoking, eat better or exercise more.

Led by Professor of Medicine and Director of the Stanford Prevention Center, Prof John Ioannidis, and WELL Director, Sandra Winter, the project will collect a variety of health data from participants who, in return, can learn more about well-being and try interventions intended to enhance wellness.

For more information, visit:

<https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2016/09/stanfords-wellness-living-laboratory-to-explore-wellness.html>

<http://stanmed.stanford.edu/2016summer/well-now.html>