

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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IMH Leads in Epidemiology Study on the Well-being of Singapore Elderly

1. The Institute of Mental Health (IMH) is collaborating with international and local research investigators to embark on a three-year nationwide epidemiological study - Well-being of the Singapore Elderly (WiSE). This comprehensive study aims to establish high-quality data of the burden of dementia and depression among the elderly in Singapore and to bridge the knowledge gap on the associated risk factors, healthcare use and economic impact.
2. This S\$4.4 million programme is funded by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Singapore Millennium Foundation which is supported by Temasek Trust.
3. The multidisciplinary research team is led by A/Prof Chong Siow Ann, Vice Chairman Medical Board (Research), and Dr Mythily Subramaniam, Deputy Director of Research, IMH and comprises international and local research investigators from Changi General Hospital, IMH, King's College London, MOH, National University Hospital and Raffles Hospital.
4. In Singapore, we currently have about 28,000 elderly aged 60 years and above with dementia, and this is expected to more than double to 80,000 by 2030. As such, dementia is a growing public health issue. Depression is another common emotional problem in older adults. However, there is little information on the impact of these illnesses on the elderly and their families in Singapore.

5. The WiSE study will establish the prevalence of depression and dementia among the elderly in Singapore as well as identify the associated risk factors for these two disorders. The study will also evaluate the economic burden of dementia.
6. In addition, WiSE will also study the burden and needs of caregivers of the elderly with dementia. Caregivers of people with dementia face physical, emotional and financial burdens and often have to manage difficult and unpredictable situations. These include behavioral problems (depression/violence/aggression) and emergency situations at home (medical emergencies, falls, etc.). However, caregivers' needs that are specific to dementia have not been fully explored. The findings will include descriptions of the current use of healthcare services and elucidate the unmet needs of people with dementia and their caregivers.
7. "There are an estimated 35.6 million people in the world with dementia and the number is expected to double by 2030. The World Health Organisation had stressed the importance of making dementia a top public health policy priority. Depression and dementia are two of the most debilitating mental health conditions in terms of health and social outcomes, and burden of illness in the elderly population. The WiSE study will provide much needed information to guide policy making and the rational allocation of resources for the elderly and their caregivers including the development of the relevant services and programmes," said A/Prof Chong Siow Ann, Vice Chairman, Medical Board (Research), IMH.
8. "This multi-centred, multidisciplinary collaborative study brings together researchers with different expertise such as qualitative research, epidemiology, health economics and mental health to collect, analyse, interpret and provide comprehensive and accurate information to stakeholders on these disorders and their myriad of complex issues. It is also important for us to be able to convey the importance of this study to the public and their support and participation are key to the success of the study. We certainly would like to urge those selected for this study to help us by agreeing to participate as their involvement will ensure that the results are accurate and are representative of the Singapore community," said Dr Mythily Subramaniam, Deputy Director (Research), IMH and Co-Principal Investigator of WiSE.

9. About 2500 people aged 60 years and above and 2800 family members will be involved in this study. Participants will be randomly selected from a list of all residents in Singapore, and the three major ethnicities will be equally represented. A professional survey firm, Ascentiq Pte Ltd, will be conducting the survey. A notification letter from the MOH will be sent to these residents to inform them of the survey.

10. A/Prof Chua Hong Choon, Chief Executive Officer, IMH said, "IMH is pleased to lead in this in-depth and comprehensive study which is of great importance as the results will have a significant impact on policy making to cater to the needs of our ageing population, as well as their caregivers. The elderly in our fast paced society are vulnerable to emotional and mental health problems such as loneliness, depression, anxiety disorders, psychosomatic disorders and adjustment issues due to aging. As our nation gears up to meet the changing needs of our aging population, mental health care for the elderly is one aspect that needs to be given priority and attention. Research and evidence-based healthcare services will help to improve the quality of life of our elderly with complex and challenging medical and mental health issues."

11. Professor Martin Prince from the 10/66 Dementia Research Group at the King's College London said, "I am very pleased to have the opportunity to collaborate with my colleagues at IMH on this important new study, the first detailed nationwide survey of dementia and mental health problems among older people in Singapore. Every country needs to monitor progress by evaluating the effects of attempts to prevent and control dementia, as well as attempts to treat and support those with the condition. Singapore has taken a lead in the region by commissioning the WiSE study."

12. The survey will be conducted over one and half years from its launch date. It will be conducted from October 2012 to December 2013. A pilot survey was carried out between August to September 2012 to test the survey processes and methodology.

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Names of Researchers Involved in WiSE

Principal Investigator:

- A/Prof Chong Siow Ann, Institute of Mental Health

Co-Principal Investigators:

- Asst. Prof. Mythily Subramaniam, Institute of Mental Health
- Dr Seng Kok Han, Institute of Mental Health
- Dr Ng Li Ling, Changi General Hospital

Co-Investigators:

- A/Prof Chua Hong Choon, Institute of Mental Health
- Ms Janhavi Vaingankar, Institute of Mental Health
- Dr Harish Magadi, Institute of Mental Health
- Dr Srinivasa Sastri Malladi, Institute of Mental Health
- Ms Huang Wanping, Institute of Mental Health
- Ms Hia Soo Boon, Institute of Mental Health
- Prof Martin Prince, King's College London
- Prof Paul McCrone, King's College London
- A/Prof Derrick Heng, Ministry of Health
- A/Prof Mabel Yap, Ministry of Health
- A/Prof Rathi Mahendran, National University Hospital
- Dr Joshua Kua, Raffles Hospital

ENGLISH-CHINESE GLOSSARY

Annex 2

Institute of Mental Health	心理卫生学院
A/Prof Chua Hong Choon Chief Executive Officer Institute of Mental Health	蔡奉俊副教授 行政总裁 心理卫生学院
Associate Professor Chong Siow Ann Vice Chairman, Medical Board (Research) Senior Consultant, Research Division & Department of Early Psychosis Intervention Institute of Mental Health	莊紹安临床副教授 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
Assistant Professor Mythily Subramaniam Deputy Director Research Division, Institute of Mental Health Well-being of the Singapore Elderly - WiSE Study	Mythily 助理教授 副主任 心理卫生学院研究部 新加坡年长人士身心健康 - WiSE 研究