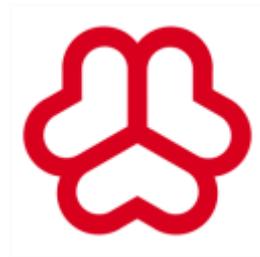




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GET ON BOARD THE POSITIVE WELLBEING BUS FOR PEACE OF MIND

The Health Promotion Board launches a free depression screening programme for residents within the community

The Health Promotion Board (HPB) and Ang Mo Kio-Hougang Citizens' Consultative Committee is reaching out and making it easier for senior citizens to assess their state of mental health by bringing the professionals to their door-step through the launch of the Positive Wellbeing bus.

2 In Singapore, the National Mental Health Survey conducted in 2004, reported a prevalence of depression of 5.5% among seniors. In the survey, it was also found that about one in 10 elderly would experience some symptoms of depression that would impact negatively on the quality of their lives. Thus, this community initiative aims to help seniors gain a better understanding of their own state of mental health and encourage seniors to seek help early, if needed.

3 "To live well in our golden years, we need to have good mental health. Often, senior citizens neglect their mental health and do not view it as a priority. Symptoms of poor mental health such as the loss of interest and feeling worthless, are more likely to go undetected, especially if the elderly are already battling other chronic medical conditions. They may be less aware of, or resistant, to talking about their mental health. If the warning signs are left unchecked for a period of time, it could lead to depression. That is why HPB has activated this initiative to bring early detection and support to the elderly.

4 "HPB's Positive Wellbeing bus makes it easy for seniors to find out if they are at risk for depression and be encouraged to seek help while at the same time, learn about taking care of their

mental wellbeing. We have simplified the process and removed the barriers for the seniors to screen for their mental wellbeing. HPB has partnered with community counsellors to provide immediate screening support to those at risk. The screening initiative is conducted in four languages to better connect with the seniors. The seniors can continue the contact with these counsellors through counselling sessions in the community. They can also consult their family physician or follow up with an appointment at the polyclinics nearest to their homes.

5 “It is important that the seniors continue to be integrated in the community as a long-term strategy to maintain positive wellness. To achieve this, HPB is partnering the grassroots to connect the seniors with their community through follow-ups and encouraging them to participate in community activities at their nearest community club,” said Mr Ang Hak Seng, CEO, HPB.

Details of the Positive Wellbeing Bus

6 On-board the Positive Wellbeing Bus, Singapore residents aged 50 and above will complete a short questionnaire (the Geriatric Depression Scale) to assess their risk of depression. Those found to be at risk of depression are encouraged to see a community counsellor on-site. HPB has partnered counsellors from Singapore Action Group of Elders (SAGE), Shan You Counselling Centres, Silver Ribbon (Singapore), Fei Yue Community Services and Care Corner Services. The severely depressed will be referred to undertake further consultation at a nearby polyclinic, or make an appointment with the psychiatrist on-site. Seniors who are screened to be well will be encouraged to sign up for HPB's Nurture Your Mind series of workshops held at community clubs.

7 The first run of the Positive Wellbeing Bus will be situated outside Hougang Sports Hall for six days from 23 to 29 July. The bus will then rove to five other community locations, aiming to reach out to 3,000 seniors by September 2011, for this holistic ground-up partnership among the different sectors.

Issued by Health Promotion Board and Ang Mo Kio-Hougang Citizens' Consultative Committee.