

PREPARING FOR YOUR FUTURE HEALTHCARE NEEDS

Piloting a Group Work Programme Among Community-Dwelling Seniors

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care community
services society
singapore



“Preparing for Your Future Healthcare Needs” is a programme developed using group work as an approach to facilitate important conversations regarding future healthcare needs, centred on one’s personal values, goals and preferences.

Background

Conversations and decision-making regarding healthcare preferences often occur at points of health shocks or medical emergencies. During such times, coping with the challenges in itself can feel overwhelming and stressful. Since anyone’s health status can change suddenly, having early discussions regarding what would matter in an event of serious illness can provide **clarity on overall goals of care**, and **better prepare individuals and their families ahead of time**. With Singaporeans living longer but spending more of their twilight years in ill health, there is therefore growing impetus and efforts to **bring these important conversations on life and health earlier upstream** in the community.

Programme Overview

“Preparing for Your Future Healthcare Needs” is a 4-session programme curated by Medical Social Workers of the **Community Health Team, Tan Tock Seng Hospital**.

Session 1: Starting Conversations

Session 2: What Matters to You

Session 3: Living Well and Leaving Well

Session 4: Celebrating our Journey

The scope of each session focused around the above topics and centred on encouraging participants to reflect on their **life values, experiences, goals and preferences towards their healthcare needs**. Through the use of psychoeducation, experiential activities and group sharing, **participants actively contributed to the mutual learning** within the group. Advance Care Plan (ACP) and Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) as pre-planning tools are included within the contents of this programme, and upon completion of participation, arrangements are made for seniors who are keen to actualise their individual ACP with the group facilitators.

Collaboration With Community Partners

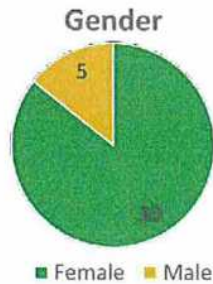
The pilot of this programme was carried out in partnership with **Care Community Services Society (CCSS)** and **Cornerstone Community Services** at their Active Aging Centres in **Serangoon** and **Ang Mo Kio** respectively.



In tandem with this, CCSS and Cornerstone each **incorporated parallel initiatives that complemented the group work programme**. Namely, participants at CCSS were offered a complimentary portrait photoshoot arranged by CCSS. On the other hand, Cornerstone linked up with a local law school to provide opportunity for application of a LPA. These initiatives were purposeful in garnering more interest and also augmented the value of participation for the seniors.

Summary of Pilot Results

The pilot comprised of 4 separate runs conducted between December 2021 and August 2022, involving a total of 35 enrolled participants. Out of these, 2 did not complete participation in the programme (i.e. less than 75% attendance) due to unforeseen circumstances.



Age range: 60 – 83 years old

- Median age: 70 years old
- Mean age: 70.74 years old



Residential Type:

All participants living in purchased HDB flats

All participants who completed the feedback form (n=24) strongly agreed/agreed that the programme was useful and relevant to plan for their future healthcare. Pre-post evaluation completed by 31 participants reported an overall increase in their (i) awareness of personal values and preferences, (ii) confidence in discussing about their future healthcare needs, and (iii) knowledge on pre-planning tools ACP and LPA.

Participants shared reflections on their experience going through the programme. This was audio-recorded and transcribed with consent. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data highlighted the following themes:

Sense of Preparedness and Control

New discoveries in knowledge and awareness

Contemplations on life and death

Communicating wishes/preferences with family

29 out of the 35 participants (83%) actualised an ACP after the completion of the programme. 1 senior already has an existing ACP and did not need a review. Additionally, 2 participants each brought along one family member, requesting to complete an ACP as well.

Next Steps

This programme will be a continued offering, with the aim of scaling up to reach out to more residents and further collaborate with other community partners within Central Health.