

# HEALTHY LONGEVITY TALENT INCUBATOR

## Course Report

The Healthy Longevity Talent Incubator (HLTI), hosted by the NUS Academy for Healthy Longevity, aims to attract young talents into the field of Healthy Longevity Medicine and foster next-generation leaders who will drive the promotion of healthy longevity in Singapore and around the world. Its inaugural edition was held at National University of Singapore (NUS), Kent Ridge Campus, University Town between 3-13 July 2023. It has received overwhelming interests from young talents worldwide with very limited advertisement efforts. After a rigorous interview process, 40 applicants and 10 volunteers were selected to participate in the inaugural incubator out of 100 applications. The list of invited speakers and guests as well as the full programme timetable are available in Appendix A and B, respectively.

### Course Outcome

#### Overall ratings from the course participants (out of 5 stars)

##### Overall satisfaction with the programme



##### Knowledge improvement after attending the programme



##### Valuable network expansion from attending the programme



Data from 35 respondents  
Median scores are shown

#### Participants' favourite parts of the course



#### Increased motivation to pursue a study or career in the Healthy Longevity field



#### Met expectations for the program



#### Will recommend incubator to colleagues and friends



#### Unexpected things participants gained from this course



### Special Thanks to

**Guest of Honour:** Mr Henry Kwek, Singapore Member of Parliament

**Brain-Body Exercise:** SPARKD

#### Donations from:

- Lee Foundation
- Oon Chiew Seng Distinguished Visitor Programme
- All individual donors

### Course Organisers

**Core team:** Prof Hans Meij (Director), Prof Andrea B Maier (Adviser), Dr Hataitip Tasena (Programme Manager), Kannan LK (Administrative Officer)

**Volunteers:** Dr Ajla Hodzic Kuerec, Dr Anna Szuecs, Dr Lihuan Guan, Dr Weilan Wang, Belinda Wang, Diya Tibrewal, Jessica Lu, Kaisy Ye, Shivaanishaa Raventhiran, Stephen Raj

**Invited senior mentors:** Prof Suresh Rattan, Prof Guenter Lepperdinger, Dr Anne Tine Hjorth

## Course Outcome (continued)

### “ How has the incubator transformed you?

“This incubator has **inspired my thinking** about why I want to work in this field, what I want to do, and how I can achieve it.”

“...more **passionate to find my niche** and pursue my career in the field...”

“[This course] has **reignited my passion and spark for science** and learning, and also motivated me to sign up to the Healthy longevity webinar series and some other short courses.”

“I became **more confidence** in my ability to do networking/ being more sociable than I expected...”

“I am definitely more confident to **pursue a career in the Longevity field.**”

“My motivation to **create better habits** on healthy choices.”

“I gained **leadership insights** I otherwise would not have had access to. I feel motivated to do further studies and to collaborate with the other participants for future endeavors. The incubator course also changed my mindset about healthcare, its goals, and the way it should be delivered...”

“I now possess a **broader perspective** and a more holistic approach to addressing the challenges in this field.”

“I definitely feel **more confident** after this incubator. The group was really nice and a safe space to connect with each other, have discussions, and to grow and develop yourself. One of my learning goals for this incubator was to get out of my comfort zone more often. That's why I really challenged myself to ask questions, to give a presentation about my research, to participate in the music night (though I am not a performer myself).”

“...Many students are intelligent, hard working and versatile, so I also have to **work hard to catch up.**”

“Through the mentorship and guidance provided by the incubator, I have **developed my skills and understanding** of health and longevity. I have also built a network of connections that will be invaluable to me in the future.”



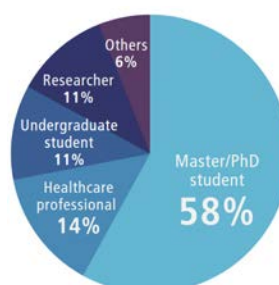
The Open House on the final day of the course was attended by over 150 Singapore residents who came to hear the Keynote talk on Human Potential and the course participants' presentations on the findings of the Singapore City Missions (the group assignments that require participants to interview or survey opinions of local residents on various ageing-related issues unique to the Singapore society). At the end of the course, participants have gained valuable knowledge, network, and inspiration to pursue their career in Healthy Longevity Medicine. Moreover, new research collaborations were initiated, and the Alumni Council was formed to empower the course graduates to continue supporting each other in the long run.

Remarkably, a few deliverables have already been achieved within one month after the Talent Incubator has ended. Two alumni, Wasu Mekniran and David Major, have offered to collaborate with the Social Longevity Project led by Prof Andrea Maier at NUHS Centre for Healthy Longevity. They will lead the focus group study in Switzerland and Hungary, respectively. And most recently, Wasu Mekniran and another alumnus, Jan Duin from the Netherlands, have also co-authored an article published on Fintech4Longevity Academy as they combined the business and medical expertise to provide insights on how FinTech plays a role in financing and scaling longevity interventions.

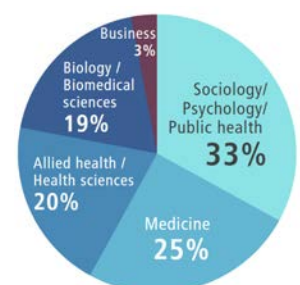
## Participant Profiles



Number of participants attending the program based on Nationality, N=44



Participant's current status



Participant's area of expertise

## A Message from the Alumni Council

*“Over 10 days, we, medical professionals, biologists and other healthcare professionals from around the world, learned about cutting-edge longevity research and interventions, as well as honing our leadership skills. Such a good mixture of participants sparked interesting ideas and interactions towards healthy longevity.*

*Although we have concluded the program, we all are excited to stay connected by establishing an alumni group. With that, HLTI participants and the Centre for Healthy Longevity can continue to inspire and motivate each other, share knowledge and information, and create a community of the next generation of Healthy Longevity scientists, researchers, practitioners and entrepreneurs.*

*The alumni council aspires to centralise information and resources for our fellow alumni (from this and future programs). We also hope to build a unique network for research collaborations, and a board where we can share opportunities in the longevity space with masters and phd students and research fellows.*

*Finally, if you are working, studying, researching or otherwise interested in the fascinating field of Longevity Health, make it your mission to attend the next Healthy Longevity Talent Incubator program. We look forward to welcoming you to our network!”*

*On behalf of the HLTI2023 Alumni Council  
Rebecca Kerstens*



### MISSION 3: How the ‘Healthier Choice’ Symbol influences dietary choices in Singapore

This mission aims to investigate whether the Healthier Choice and Nutri-Grade symbols are helpful to promote better nutritional choices in Singapore.

Our survey among 600 residents shows that more than 80% know of these symbols. However, most do not take them into account when selecting drinks or meals. Suggestions from consumers and hawker stall owners include bigger and clearer symbols, make more information available, and make the adoption of relevant symbols compulsory which may improve the effectiveness of these symbols.

## Singapore City Missions: Highlighted Findings

The Singapore (SG) City Missions are specially designed to deepen participants’ understanding of community issues related to healthy ageing in Singapore. Through these exercises, participants will get to analyse benefits and challenges of local initiatives as well as foster the development of innovative, unexplored solutions. To complete the SG City Mission, participants will be divided into five groups, each embarking on a distinct mission. They will engage in literature searches, field trips encompassing surveys and interviews, and data analysis. On the final day of the programme, they will have a unique opportunity to share their findings and thoughts with the public audience including policymakers. Insights gained from these exercises may transcend borders and be applicable to other societies beyond Singapore. Detailed summaries of the five missions can be found in Appendix C.

### MISSION 1: “Buddy-Up” to encourage physical activity in Singapore

The “Buddy-Up” program aims to encourage people to walk or jog together, which is a novel approach to increase physical activity. This mission aims to evaluate the acceptability of a “Buddy-Up” program in the Singaporean population.

According to our survey among 317 Singaporeans, 75% would participate in “Buddy-Up” for walking or jogging together. 43% of the respondents who do not exercise regularly reported that “Buddy-Up” would increase their exercise frequency to at least once a week. Thus, “Buddy-Up” can make Singaporeans more physically active.

### MISSION 2: Opinions on Increasing the Retirement Age in Singapore

This mission aims to survey public opinions on benefits and challenges of increasing retirement age, determine factors that drive Singaporeans to continue working, and identify public preferences for retirement age.

A total of 134 Singaporeans and permanent residents (aged 40-65 years) have completed the survey. While 60.8% agreed with and recognized the economic value of the decision, 58.6% expressed concerns about the physical health challenges and 75.5% raised concerns about the limited job opportunities for older individuals. The government is suggested to address the raised concerns to foster a positive environment where people can transit smoothly into an extended working life, thereby benefiting both individuals and overall economy of Singapore.

## MISSION 4: Transportation and Workout: A 2-in-1 Approach

This mission aims to assess opinions, challenges, and innovations for combining transportation and workout activities of Singaporean citizens.

A survey of 202 individuals showed that 61% could be motivated to use active transportation. Infrastructure, climate, health, socialization, and social acceptance were primary motivators. Park gyms along travel routes, reward apps and squat challenges, stationary bikes at bus stops, and air-conditioned cycling lanes were desired by more than 50% of the individuals. Transportation and workout can be combined by implementing innovative ideas and is desired by the inhabitants of Singapore.

## MISSION 5: Healthier SG – How well is it understood?

Healthier SG is a national initiative by the Ministry of Health (MOH) that promotes accessible and affordable preventive care, empowering Singaporeans to live longer, healthier lives. In this mission, we surveyed 117 Singaporeans and permanent residents aged 60 years and above on their awareness and knowledge about Healthier SG.

About two third (65.8%) had heard about the program, of which 37.7% did not want to enroll, citing reasons pertaining to (a) a lack of knowledge/misconceptions, (b) being proactive in maintaining health and/or feeling the program is unnecessary, (c) mistrusting the healthcare system. More than half of these respondents (55.2%; 24.8% of total surveyed) demonstrated poor understanding of the programme (answered correctly to  $\leq 2$  out of 4 knowledge questions). Yet, some older individuals appeared to feel less concerned by the program, given that they do not feel healthy enough to do more physical activities. New campaign waves should strive to correct existing misconceptions and increase the programme's appeal for older and/or frailer members of society.

## Learning Points and Future Perspectives

The next edition of the Healthy Longevity Talent Incubator will take place in June 2024. Learning from the success of the first edition as well as the feedback from participants and invited guests, the table below depicts what should remain the same and what should be done differently in the subsequent editions in order to maximise the outcomes of this course.

What should remain the same	What should be done differently
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue the rigorous participant selection process through interviews.</li> <li>Continue broadening the variety of participant backgrounds while remain focusing on the “young talents” (postgraduate students and early-career professionals).</li> <li>Maintain the length of the programme at 10 days but add one additional night to allow time for appropriate closure and reflections after the public presentations.</li> <li>Maintain the variety of the course content and invited speakers/interviewers.</li> <li>Continue running and improving the Singapore City Missions.</li> <li>Continue incorporating exercise sessions in daily activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide airfare coverage for selected participants from disadvantageous backgrounds.</li> <li>Cater time for more in-depth discussion and conversations with thought leaders, thus the number of invited speakers will be reduced.</li> <li>Extend wind-down time in each evening for knowledge digestions, reflections, and bonding.</li> <li>Consider adding workshop or talks on topics such as project management, cosmetics, mental health, etc.</li> <li>Provide some guides about Singapore culture and tips for engaging with local communities before the Singapore City Mission field trips.</li> </ul>

