

New study on seniors aims to help them age well

A new study is being done to gather more information on the elderly who live in the western part of Singapore, to help them develop mental resilience and other resources needed to age well.

The Community Health and Intergenerational (CHI) study, to be done by the Mind Science Centre (MSC), a research centre under the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the National University Health System, will recruit a cohort of 1,000 people aged 60 years and above.

Recruitment started last year, and the study will be completed next year.

The study will assess the subjects' health, sleep, quality of life, attitudes and values, as well as social connectedness.

Carried out by a team of multi-disciplinary experts in fields such as psychiatry, dentistry, cardiology, orthopaedics, pharmacy and anthropology, the study seeks to provide data necessary to identify groups at risk of medical problems, cognitive decline, social isolation and mental illness.

This is so that subsequent interventions can be introduced into the community to delay or reverse cognitive decline, as well as improve other psychological aspects related to quality of life, depression and social connectedness.

Other smaller studies will be done as part of this large-scale study.

One of the smaller studies aims to document the relationship between volunteerism and its perceived benefits.

Another, on reminiscence and narrative therapy, seeks to test the effects of non-drug intervention on improving intergenerational communication.

There is also a study that explores the link between dietary counselling and its impact on mental health.

The principal investigator of the CHI study, Associate Professor Rathi Mahendran of the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine at NUS, said: "There has not been an ageing study in Singapore that is as comprehensive as this.

"A similar one was done in Jurong, but this study will be a broader investigation on issues affecting the elderly and the interventions that can be developed."

She added: "We know that drugs cannot help reverse cognitive decline, so we hope to offer the elderly more options and activities that are stimulating to delay or reverse cognitive decline."

A charity concert inspired by the MSC's work and research will be put up by volunteers at the Esplanade Concert Hall on Oct 28 to give insight into people affected by dementia.

Janice Tai