

Project Vitalize

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Single Year

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Project Overview

A. Area of Concern

Diabetes remains a pressing issue in Singapore. According to a Straits Times study, among adults aged 18 to 69, 12-15% suffer from pre-diabetes. What perpetuates this situation is the lack of an active lifestyle amongst Singaporeans. A WHO study found that about 34% of men in Singapore do not exercise enough, compared with around 39% of women.

The elderly are the most vulnerable group in society, due to their weakened immune systems. On top of that, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, it is less likely that they would be able to get outdoors and take preventive measures against the disease through conventional practices like frequent exercise and making a conscious effort to adopt healthier eating habits.

B. Underlying Problem

Given that the occurrence of diabetes in Singapore is becoming ever more prevalent among senior citizens, how might we promote a healthy and active living lifestyle among the general public, especially seniors, so that more awareness is raised on its importance, their blood sugar levels can be controlled and their risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes is reduced?

C. Plan of Action

We partnered with Thye Hua Kwan (THK) Moral Charities and focused on helping the elderly at THK Indus Moral Centre, one of their senior activity centres.

Before COVID, we were discussing with the beneficiary on conducting fortnightly interaction sessions at their centre, where we would engage the elderly in fun yet educational activities on diabetes. They included excursions to various places and talks by a certified nutritionist on diet management. Furthermore, we also had larger scale outreach plans, such as a public frisbee competition, release of a documentary and various school-based publicity activities.

However, due to COVID, all our plans had to be replaced with alternative ones. Our target group also did not have any access to the internet, hence we were unable to conduct any online activities with them. Hence, coupled with existing restrictions on physical interaction, no interaction was possible entirely.

Timeframe

Month	Events
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Launching of social media outreach on project’s Instagram page, comprising weekly facts and common misconceptions about diabetes
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Publication of the project on the school’s council social media page ● Continuation of social media outreach
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preparation of a “care package” for 35 elderly, containing various healthy food and drink items and a brochure for non-teaching staff in our school, increasing their awareness of diabetes
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaboration with THK’s Meals on Wheels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Designing of a menu containing a week of simple, healthy dishes containing our adapted recipes, to be distributed through 1700 meals with our own brochure across 750 households ○ Many of these households are single elderly living alone, and are unable to afford their daily expenses

Implementation of Action Plan

A. Actions and Outcomes to Date

Meals-on-Wheels

The collaboration was completed successfully with approval for us to distribute our brochure and our menu being taken into consideration.

We were able to go down to the HDB blocks where the food was being distributed to observe the contactless distribution process of the food and our brochure, under the guidance of the beneficiary representative.

Care Package

The care packages were packed and successfully given out over the course of one week to the non-teaching staff within the school.

Outreach

We have utilised our Instagram account to share a total of 13 facts or common misconceptions on diabetes through weekly posts over 3 months.

Project Outcomes

A. Accomplishments

Through THK's Meals-on-Wheels programme, we have reached out to more than 750 households, consisting largely of elderly above the age of 65 living alone. Within school, we outreached to over 35 elderly non-teaching staff. Our Instagram page with more than 1200 followers has also helped us maintain an online presence.

B. Reflections

With our original plan of fortnightly interaction at THK Indus Moral Care cancelled, we tried to move to online sessions but they were unfeasible due to the elderly lacking access to the internet. We were quite frustrated that none of our original plans could come to fruition, and disappointed that we could not have made a bigger community impact. At some points, we also felt that the

impact our project could make would be insignificant as THK is already a well-established organisation with many successful ongoing initiatives.

Despite the challenges faced, we took our setbacks as a learning opportunity, understanding that adaptability and flexibility are important in a large-scale project like this. After communication with our beneficiary, we also realised the importance of value-adding to their existing programmes. We hence decided to take a step further in planning the menu for Meals-on-Wheels by trying to suggest healthier recipes for the food, hoping to have it implemented permanently, ensuring long-term sustainability and impact.

Our juniors have expressed interest in continuing the project in 2021. We hope they would be able to properly implement the various pre-Covid plans we had if restrictions allow, and try their best to find a way around the elderly's inability to access technology if this big problem still persists.

C. Scope of Impact

Community impact: The elderly from THK were able to understand how to lead a healthy and active lifestyle. We also imparted some knowledge pertaining to the issue of diabetes and taught them some basic exercises to reduce their risk of it. We hope they are motivated to lead a healthier life by continuing the practices we have inculcated through our project.

Resolution of underlying problem: Reaching out to over 750 elderly households through the THK Meals-on-Wheels initiative and 35 non-teaching staff within school has enabled us to tackle the awareness-raising aspect of our project. Additionally, we were able to make a long-lasting impact on THK's Meals-on-Wheels initiative through healthier meal recipes, while also using it as a platform to educate the elderly about their health, benefiting them beyond the course of our project this year.