

# Project Meliorate

7-40

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Single Year Project

## **Section 1: Overview**

### **1. Area of concern**

Statistics of lonely elderly

Old-age loneliness has always been a primary concern. More than 40 percent of seniors regularly experience loneliness, according to a University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) study. This feeling of separation and disconnection from others may predict serious health problems and even death, the UCSF researchers find. With Covid-19 safety measures employed by the government in Singapore, researchers are expecting loneliness to increase during the pandemic measures as lockdown and social distancing are instituted for elderly citizens living in old folk homes in the pretext of health safety. Loneliness has been associated with perceived stress and low social support, which could be plausible effects of the Covid-19 measures. The lack of social interaction has been shown to be associated with poor mental and physical health and to be a risk factor for serious illness and mortality.

### **2. Challenges Identified**

Due to Covid-19 measures, the elderly would have lesser social interactions as compared to the pre-Covid times. For example, there was a cap of 2 visitors for old folk homes, starting January 11 last year to June 19th.\* This would cause the process of visiting nursing homes to be more complicated as to who goes to visit the elderly and thus this may lead to less visits to elderly homes. The lack of social interaction and physical activity could have a negative impact on the mental and physical health of vulnerable elderly populations. Chronic loneliness is associated with a greater risk of health problems including heart disease, dementia, depression, and anxiety, a shorter life span, raises mortality.

### **3. Underlying Problem**

Given that COVID-19 has barred most seniors' at elderly centres interaction with the outside world, exacerbating their problems of deteriorating mental and physical health, as well as their already lonely lives, leading to depression and possibly, social isolation, how might we provide novel yet accomplishable experiences so that their physical and mental health as well as their social wellbeing can be improved in the year 2021 and beyond?

#### 4. Plan of Action

We started off with a needs analysis to understand what the elderly and the eldercare centre needed through sessions and surveys. The main takeaway from our needs analysis was that the activities should not require the use of the lower body, and that many are unable to write by themselves. From the survey, we concluded that the number of people visiting the elderly has significantly decreased, and the elderly at the centre are bored. Therefore, our first aim was to ensure that the elderly were engaged and could be part of the activities curated, from quizzes to sculpting activities. Secondly, we wanted to ensure that the time the families spent with their grandparents were meaningful, thus we had to come up with activities and probing questions so that the conversation could be more meaningful. We asked the centre for the feedback and changed the activities accordingly.

#### Section 2: Implementation of Plan of Action

Session date	List of Programs	Equipment needed	Overview of program
24rd March, Wednesday, (2.30pm to 3.15pm)	Violin and 笛子 Performance Bingo	1. Bingo sheets 2. Prizes	Pre-recording violin performance would be shown(5-10mins) followed by a live 笛子 performance. Bingo sheets(Paper with blanks) would be printed. Free space in the centre of the bingo sheet, no number is required to be filled in. Fill in the rest of the boxes with a number of your choice from 1-100. (Printed in excess to play more rounds- due to time constraints I think we would only play one round). The host draws

			a number from an online Bingo machine and the elderly would cross out the corresponding number. If a row of numbers is cancelled, the player wins a prize.
31th March, Wednesday, (2.30pm to 3.15pm)	Pictionary/Online guessing game	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prizes</li> <li>2. Mobile phones to do the quiz</li> </ol>	<p>Group members will present a picture/draw out an object using tools and show it to the elderly through zoom. Elderly will guess. Answers will be provided to the facils in the care center so that they can distribute prizes accordingly.</p>
31th March, Wednesday, (2.30pm to 3.15pm)	Origami	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Origami paper</li> </ol>	<p>Origami paper would be provided to the elderly. On our screens, we would be sharing the steps to assembly the item.(2 to 3 rounds)</p>
7th April, Wednesday, (2.30pm to 3.15pm)	Quizzes on places in Singapore back then and now	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mobile phones</li> <li>2. Prizes</li> </ol>	<p>A kahoot quiz would be created. The quiz would show the past and present version of a specific place in Singapore and would want the elderly to guess where the place is. Prizes would be awarded to the top 3 scorers.</p>
7th April, Wednesday,	Wheelchair Yoga	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nil</li> </ol>	<p>Prevent stiffness. Works the upper body.</p>

<p>(2.30pm to 3.15pm)</p>			<p>Procedure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deep Breathes (8 counts. Inhaling and exhaling - 1 count. While inhaling, hands raise up and touch as high as one can go. While exhaling, bring hands back down to the lap)</li> <li>2. Neck stretches(8 seconds. Stretch to the left, right, up and down)</li> <li>3. Deltoid stretch(8 seconds per arm)</li> <li>4. Tricep stretch(8 seconds per tricep)</li> <li>5. Side stretch(8 counts)</li> <li>6. Forward stretches (Hands on the lap and stretch hands to kneecap by bending body)</li> </ol>
<p>21st July, Wednesday (2.30pm to 3.15pm)</p>	<p>Origami</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Origami Paper</li> <li>2. Food and snacks</li> </ol>	<p>Group member would go through slides of the steps to fold a paper crane origami</p> <p>Food and snacks for the elderly to enjoy while doing the activity</p>
<p>29th Thursday July,</p>	<p>Performance</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Food and snacks</li> </ol>	<p>Group member presents a pre-recorded video of</p>

<p>(2.30pm to 3.15pm)</p>	<p>Wheelchair yoga</p>		<p>violin performance</p> <p>Group member presents a pre-recorded original video of stretches in wheelchair yoga, another member explains the steps</p>
<p>4th August, Wednesday (2.30pm to 3.15pm)</p>	<p>Gardening</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plastic bottle (pot)</li> <li>2. Wheatgrass seeds</li> <li>3. Soil</li> <li>4. Tray</li> <li>5. Spoon (gardening tool)</li> </ol>	<p>Plastic bottle cut out from used drink bottle is used as the pot for gardening to save costs and be more environmentally friendly</p> <p>Group members presents and goes through slides on how to use the materials provided to grow wheatgrass and how to care for it long-term</p>
<p>5th August, Thursday (2.30pm to 3.15pm)</p>	<p>Sculpting</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clay</li> <li>2. Food and snacks</li> </ol>	<p>Group member presents slides on how to split the clay so that the elderly can get different colours and steps to create a bear model</p>

All these sessions are conducted through zoom

## **Section 3: Project Outcomes**

### **1. Accomplishments**

- a. For the first 5 sessions, we had 30 elderly people participating in the activities, 15 male and 15 females. Each session lasted about 45 minutes each. For the next 4 sessions, 16 elderly residents participated in the activities, 8 male and 8 female. Each session also lasted for 45 minutes. The google site was also shared with the family members visiting the elderly via the centre to aid in ensuring that the conversations were meaningful and that the family members had activities to participate in together. The feedback given was that it was very intuitive and informative, and was very effective and helpful in ensuring that the conversations were meaningful.

### **2. Reflections**

- a. We are very grateful to be offered this opportunity to do this project, and are glad that we managed to conduct all these meaningful activities even during the COVID-19 period. Due to the high risk nature of our Target Audience, we were not able to conduct sessions in person, which we feared might lessen our impact on these seniors. Fortunately, the seniors are all very engaged with our sessions and seeing their smiles during the sessions really made us very happy.

Some challenges we faced during this period would be the tightening of the restrictions in May causing the cut in our programmes. We were not able to distribute the relevant materials for some of the sessions and had to replan our timetable for the sessions. We would have liked to conduct many more sessions during that period but it would be unwise to risk ourselves and others in doing so. The takeaway for our group through this incident would be to strengthen communication and planning, so as not to repeat the same mistake in the future.

Fortunately, we foresaw the possibility that the Covid situation could worsen and had planned ahead for some of the activities. We purchased and delivered the materials ahead of time, and could still conduct some of our activities. We had also planned activities which did not require the delivery of such materials, and swapped these activities with those that required materials, therefore we could still conduct the sessions as planned.

After the restrictions were lifted, our project went back into full force in term 3, where we organised more fun filled activities for the seniors, and thus managed to overcome this hurdle.

### **3. Scope of Project**

#### **a. Community Impact**

- i. The family members of the elderly in the eldercare centre could understand that the elderly need their company in this trying time. Through this project, we hope that the family members can visit the elderly, and using our google site, engage in meaningful activities and conversations with them.

#### **b. Community Involvement**

- i. The elderly are lonely and therefore in need of company. This pandemic had robbed them of precious entertainment and opportunities to mingle with each other. Mass scale events cannot occur as a result. We, along with the caregivers, as well as possibly, the family members of the elderly chipped in to help solve this problem by introducing interactive activities which allow for sufficient communication and interaction, as well as stimulate their senses while maintaining pandemic measures.

#### **c. Resolution of AoCs/UP**

- i. Given that we have identified that the pandemic has indeed negatively affected the elderly's physical and mental health, we managed to reach out to Thong Teck Home for Senior citizens and engaged 30 people (reduced to 16 people in some sessions due to SMM). We have conducted a total of 9 meaningful sessions which has comprised of engaging activities to captivate the elderly and thus achieved our goal of:
  - o Provide meaningful interaction
  - o Lifting their spirits
  - o Providing them with their own personalised, handmade, memorabilia(clay sculptures, potted plant) which would allow them to have a better experience and as a keepsake, and thus achieved our goal of inserting fun and joy into their lives, creating an impact in their lives.

**Word Count: 1704**

## **References**

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