

Older Singaporeans

at a Crossroads

Centre for Ageing Research
and Education (CARE)
2019 Symposium

Findings from a National Survey on
Active and Productive Ageing
Among Older Singaporeans

8 May 2019

9am - 5pm
Amphitheatre, Duke-NUS
Medical School (Level 2)

Transitions in Health,
Employment, Social
Engagement and
Intergenerational
Transfers in Singapore
Study – I
(THE SIGNS Study – I)

A REPORT ON THE SYMPOSIUM







“Older Singaporeans at a Crossroads – Findings from a National Survey on Active and Productive Ageing among Older Singaporeans” Symposium
Transitions in Health, Employment, Social Engagement and
Intergenerational Transfers in Singapore Study – I (THE SIGNS Study – I)

8 May 2019

Organised By:

Centre of Ageing Research and Education

Duke-NUS Medical School, Singapore

Symposium Report

1. Introduction

Singapore’s population is ageing rapidly. Recent estimates suggest that by 2030, approximately one-quarter of the population will be above the age of 65. Longevity has been increasing steadily in Singapore. The current average life expectancy is 82 years and this is expected to go up to 85 years in 2040. One of the challenges in this demographic environment is how to extend health span, that is, how to extend the number of years that individuals spend productively and actively, and in good health. The Centre for Ageing Research and Education (CARE) has embarked on a longitudinal study in 2016 to answer this question – Transitions in Health, Employment, Social Engagement and Inter-Generational Transfers in Singapore Study (THE SIGNS Study).

The Symposium on ‘Older Singaporeans at a Crossroads – Findings from a National Survey on Active and Productive Ageing Among Older Singaporeans’ was organized to feature findings from the first wave of THE SIGNS Study providing a snapshot of productive and active ageing in Singapore in 2016-17.

The symposium was followed by two days of roundtables discussions to enable more in-depth exchanges between researchers and key policy and practice representatives. The roundtables tackled issues pertaining to health and healthcare utilization, work and retirement, networking and social engagement, lifelong learning.

The symposium was attended by a total of 105 participants with 96 representations across all three sectors of research, policy and practice. Details of the symposium’s participation is in Appendix I.

2. Symposium Programme

8 May, 9 am – 5 pm, Amphitheatre, Duke-NUS Medical School (Level 2) 8 College Road, Singapore 169857		
Time	Topic	Presenters
0800 - 0845	Registration	-
0900 - 0945	Welcome and Introduction Methodology and Overview	Associate Professor Angelique Chan, Executive Director
0945 - 1030	How Healthy are Older Singaporeans	Assistant Professor Rahul Malhotra, Head of Research
1030 - 1100	Healthcare use of older Singaporeans	Ms June Lee May Ling, Research Associate
1100 - 1130	Tea Break	
1130 - 1200	The Ties that Bind – Social networks and participation of older Singaporeans	Dr Peter Tay, Research Fellow
1200 - 1230	Volunteering and Support Provision to Family Members among Older Singaporeans	Assistant Professor Grand Cheng, Visiting Professor
1230 - 1330	Lunch	
1330 - 1415	Work or Leisure: A false dichotomy in the case of Singapore's older persons	Dr Abhijit Visaria, Research Fellow
1415 - 1445	Are Older Singaporeans Learning?	Ms Veronica Goh Shi Min, Research Associate
1445 - 1515	The road to learning is paved with good intentions: Identifying barriers to older persons learning in Singapore	Dr Ad Maulod, Research Fellow
1515 - 1545	Tea Break	
1545 - 1630	CARE Panel	All Presenters

Useful takeaways from the conference

How Healthy Are Older Singaporeans

- Perception of what seniors may need have to be changed as it may differ from what is actually needed.
- There is a need to address the tension that arises when older persons are given control over their life's choices as compared to being given specific tailored choices.
- More considerations needed to be made to address the older persons' concerns.
- Elderly profile changes over time and it is important to compare data from 2 different periods.

Healthcare Use of Older Singaporeans

- Positive initiatives such as health screening are critical to successful ageing, which is why demands for such activities are increasing.
- The availability of data from the study i.e. statistics has given policy makers and researchers a clearer picture of what can/should be done for the elder persons.

The Ties that Bind – Social networks and participation of older Singaporeans

- Service providers can work towards curating programmes that will allow older persons to drive their own programmes. Given freedom to make their own decisions, they will feel empowered and this will indirectly inspire their peers to follow their footsteps.
- Social engagement has shown to improve learning participation.

Work or Leisure - A false dichotomy in the case of Singapore's older persons **Are Older Singaporeans Learning?**

- Women derive joy from work more easily than men.
- Apart from flexible work arrangements, employers could reconfigure workspace to entice older persons to join back the workforce.

The road to learning is paved with good intentions **- Identifying barriers to older persons learning in Singapore**

- The identification of at-risk subgroups is useful for field experts to sharpen their scope of work in the respective areas.

