

# Free health checks for seniors by students

Duke-NUS medical student volunteers start scheme to boost seniors' well-being

✔ **ANGTIAN**

When Miss Lee Li Wen, 24, visited an elderly woman at her home to conduct a health screening, she was shocked to see the diabetic patient's insulin medication stored in a cupboard.

The medical student said: "Insulin has to be refrigerated, otherwise, the medication will become ineffective and the senior's blood sugar level will become dangerously high, causing her life to be in danger."

Upon probing, Miss Lee realised the senior did not understand the storage instructions on the medication and helped her re-organise her storage.

Miss Lee is one of 58 student volunteers of a health awareness and monitoring programme organised by students from Duke-NUS Medical School in partnership with Mount Alvernia Hospital and NTUC SilverACE Senior Activity Centre.

Under the programme, students provide free in-home health screenings once or twice a month for financially disadvantaged seniors living in rental flats in Lengkok Bahru and Bukit Merah.

More than 90 seniors have



Miss Lee Li Wen and Mr Chang Min Kai. TNP PHOTOS: **JONATHAN CHOO**

benefited from the programme since it started in June last year.

Apart from screening body mass index, blood pressure and sugar levels, students also conduct home environment checks, lifestyle counselling and refer seniors to befriending services.

## COMMON PROBLEM

The lack of understanding of medical conditions and treatment is a common problem that Miss Lee and fellow volunteers observe during the home visits.

Miss Lee said: "The knowledge gap results in seniors taking medication wrongly or making unhealthy lifestyle choices."

"Mobility and financial challenges also deter seniors from going for medical appointments."

Mr Chang Min Kai, 28, who started the programme with

four schoolmates, hopes it will help solve these problems.

He said: "We hope to improve access to healthcare in the community while helping to monitor the senior's chronic conditions, empower them with medical knowledge and encourage medication compliance."

Mr Chang recalled how he managed to convince an elderly man with chronic lung disease to take his medication regularly after several home visits.

Miss Lee said: "Most seniors we visit live alone and complain about feeling lonely and useless."

"However, they are untapped sources of wisdom, and if we are willing to spend time with them, many of them are happy to share their life experiences with us."

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