

New book highlights nationwide dementia prevention effort

Programme mooted by SM Teo's late wife has helped seniors, trained volunteers

Nadine Chua

A dementia prevention programme mooted by Senior Minister Teo Chee Hean's late wife has now grown into a nationwide programme that combines health education, art, music, horticultural therapy and physical activities.

The Age Well Everyday (AWE) programme has led to the training of more than 110 volunteers to reach out to more elderly people.

Overall, more than 3,000 seniors have benefited from it.

Some 8,000 individuals have also enrolled in and benefited from various healthcare modules through the AWE e-learning training course launched in 2018.

The programme was mentioned in a book, titled *Ageing With Dignity*, written by researchers and volunteers of the programme.

In his speech at the launch of the book yesterday, Mr Teo thanked the National University Health System's (NUHS) Mind Science Centre, which published the book, its editors Kua Ee Heok and Rathi Mahendran, contributors and those who helped produce the book.

Mr Teo said there are currently eight centres running the AWE programme, adding: "The programme is designed to delay cognitive deterioration, reduce anxiety and increase sociability, and in so doing, help to delay the onset of dementia and improve the quality of



Senior Minister Teo Chee Hean (left) and Dr Cheong Choong Kong, chairman of the National University Health System's Mind Science Centre, at the launch of the book *Ageing With Dignity* yesterday. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

life of seniors."

He paid tribute to the NUHS Mind Science Centre and AWE programme, saying they always had a special place in the heart of his late wife, Mrs Teo Poh Yim.

Mrs Teo died in October last year. She was 67.

Addressing the NUHS Mind Science Centre team and those who had contributed to the AWE programme, Mr Teo said: "She fervently believed in your mission and your work, in helping both the young and the elderly to develop positive perspectives on ageing, and in the potential to transform the lives of people through rigorous evidence-based research and structured community programmes.

"(My family and I) are honoured that the book has been dedicated in the memory of Poh Yim."

Mr Teo said that among all diseases, dementia is the seventh leading cause of death, and one of the major causes of disability and

dependency among the elderly globally.

He noted that in Singapore, one in 10 seniors aged 60 and above has dementia.

"With increased life expectancy and our ageing population, we expect the number of people with this condition to increase. It is therefore critical to raise awareness of dementia and increase support for persons with the condition and their caregivers," said Mr Teo.

On the significance of the book, Professor Kua said: "There's a lot of negativity about ageing. Some may think that old people are a burden to society. But what we want people to know is that old people play a big part in the country. So a sense of dignity for them is so important."

The book costs \$35 (excluding GST) and is available at major bookstores.

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