

Workers get free dental check-up

To address the growing dental care needs among migrant workers, medical NGO HealthServe collaborated with the NUS Faculty of Dentistry (NUS Dentistry) and the NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health (NUS Public Health) to hold Singapore's first Migrant Workers' Dental Screening and Health Education Fair last Sunday.

The event at Terusan Recreation Centre in Jurong attracted more than 400 migrant workers, many of whom got their teeth and gums checked by volunteer dentists at no cost.

A team of more than 120 volunteers from the three organisations took on different roles, such as screening the workers for oral diseases and educating them on oral hygiene.

Workers who required more complex follow-up treatment were referred to HealthServe's dental clinic in Geylang, which operates every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday night and charges a flat fee of \$15 for consultation, treatment and medication.

"The dental check-up was very good," said Mr Ismail Shariful, who works in the processing sector.

"I found out that I have tooth decay. I also learnt how to take care of my teeth."

Dr Jeremy Lim, HealthServe's vice-chairman and associate professor at NUS Public Health, stressed that early preventive care is crucial for the workers as poor oral health.

Besides the immediate problems of infection, poor oral health has shown to be associated with increased risks of



PHOTO: HEALTHSERVE

chronic conditions like diabetes.

"Through this event, we aim to build awareness among migrant workers on the importance of oral health and effective self-care and empower them to take charge of their overall health and well being," he said.

The collaborative effort also provided students from NUS Dentistry the opportunity to make practical uses of the knowledge and skills they have learnt through the formal curriculum.

"As they provide oral health education to the workers, they can also better appreciate the oral health concerns in the community and become more empathetic to their patients' needs in the future," said associate professor Wong Mun Loke, acting dean and vice-dean (academic affairs).

"Interacting with fellow volunteers in such off-campus activities broadens

their exposure and encourages them to reach out and make a difference in the community as a student and later on as a qualified dentist."

Affordable dental care for low-wage migrant workers remains an underserved area in Singapore.

To bridge this gap, HealthServe and its partner agencies will continue to focus on scaling up its dental offerings.

To serve as a dental or medical volunteer with HealthServe, go to www.healthserve.org.sg/volunteer

Migrant workers, employers or concerned members of the public can seek assistance from HealthServe's 24-hour crisis helpline: 3129 5000.

More information can be found at www.healthserve.org.sg