

Voice OF Dementia

The newsletter of the Alzheimer's Disease Association

VOLUME **3** ISSUE **2**
JULY 2019

FEATURE

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IN THE KNOW

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ADA Volunteer Mr Rajendra Gour met up with Mr Paul Teo, a caregiver to his mother who has advanced Alzheimer's. Through his conversation, he gets some insight into how caregivers can make heart connections with their loved ones despite dementia.

BUILDING AWARENESS THROUGH IMMERSION

On 19 Mar, participants at the launch of the virtual reality (VR) experience—called the Educational Dementia Immersive Experience (EDIE™)—were able to step into the shoes of a person with dementia.

The event introduced ADA's new Enabling EDIE™ workshop, which leverages on VR technology to create an immersive experience where users get to experience the visual and perception challenges faced by a person with dementia. Through Enabling EDIE™, ADA hopes to help



learners enhance their knowledge of the impact of dementia, and encourage them to develop a support plan with the goal of enablement.

“With EDIE™, dementia care training conducted by ADA Academy is enhanced. EDIE™ takes into consideration the sensory perceptual changes faced by the person with dementia, while putting the participant through a highly immersive experience. The technology provides the bridge to the community involved, including health practitioners, and those influencing the care environments such as administrators of nursing homes and senior care facilities, and even architects, to truly put themselves in the shoes of the person living with dementia,” shared Head of Academy, Ms Koh Hwan Jing.

First developed by Dementia Australia in 2016, ADA bought 16 headsets to conduct the workshops locally, and hopes to develop localised scenarios within three years. We also hope to reach 1,000 people through the Enabling EDIE™ workshops and roadshows in the time. This programme is funded and made possible by an anonymous donor. If you'd like to take the chance to learn more about dementia, you can register at alz.org.sg/artc/edie.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND DEMENTIA?

Based on The Well-Being of the Singapore Elderly study by Institute of Mental Health in 2015, one in 10 aged 60 and above may have dementia. This translates to an estimated 82,000 people in Singapore living with dementia in 2018, with the number expected to go beyond 100,000 by 2030. There is an urgent need to create more awareness of this condition and public education is one way to do it.

Between 9 to 24 March 2019, under the Forget Us Not (FUN) Campaign, ADA organised an ‘Understanding Dementia’ exhibition at Punggol Central to educate and raise awareness of dementia. Through pop quizzes, posters, and FUN campaign videos, volunteers and staff engaged some 430 from all walks of life.

“This is one of the biggest (and longest) public awareness platforms we’ve done under the FUN Campaign. We are glad to have made an impact on those who spoke to us, with some sharing their



concerns on dementia. Through this platform, we were able clarify some of the misconceptions surrounding the condition. This includes assumptions that Alzheimer's disease and dementia are the same thing, when dementia itself is not a disease, but a name for a group of symptoms that commonly include problems with memory, thinking, problem solving, language, and perception, while Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia,” shared Ms Khoo Mary-Ann, Community Enabling Consultant.

VOLUNTEERING TO TOUCH LIVES



In appreciation of the partnership and support provided by our active volunteers, ADA organised a Volunteer Networking & Appreciation event. Held at The Catholic Centre on 2 March, our volunteers got to hear more about ADA's strategic directions moving forward.

Everyone also had the chance to get to know each other better through icebreakers, where they shared their area of involvement in ADA's programmes, why they volunteer, and any memorable experiences they've had during their volunteering journey. When asked what he enjoyed most about the event, Mr Ng Yong Seng said that it was the opportunity to be able to meet other volunteers. “As a volunteer, we can and should do more to contribute to ADA by providing assistance to those in our neighbourhood. It can be attending to the person with dementia by offering assistance — without undermining them,” he continued.

Volunteers also bonded over the terrarium making workshop, where they shared what their terrariums symbolised, i.e. how building a dementia inclusive society for our clients to thrive can be likened to how they created a conducive environment for the plants to flourish.

In her speech during the event, Mrs Theresa Lee, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of ADA, thanked the volunteers, saying, “Your kind efforts and time spent with our clients has brought a smile to their faces, which not only contributed to their wellbeing, but also to the wellbeing of their families and caregivers.”

VOLUNTEER WITH US!

Make a difference today. More information can be found at alz.org.sg/volunteer.



Read more stories here.



UPCOMING EVENTS

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP (MANDARIN)

Dealing With Different Behaviours of Persons With Dementia
20 Jul at FOW (Tiong Bahru)

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP (MALAY)

Tackling Challenging Behaviour in Dementia
27 Jul at FOW (Tiong Bahru)

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP (ENGLISH)

Self-Compassion in Caregiving
17 Aug at NHC (Jurong Point)

13th International Congress of the Asian Society Against Dementia and 6th Singapore International Neurocognitive Symposium

28-31 Aug at Shangri-La Hotel Singapore

Organised by National Neuroscience Institute, this combined international congress and symposium is themed “Early Diagnosis and Timely Intervention of Neurocognitive Disorders”. Participants can expect in-depth sessions on clinical aspects of dementia, biomarkers for pre-dementia, young onset dementia and more.

DEMENTIA CARE TRAINING WORKSHOPS FOR FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS

Elective Module 2: Meaningful Activities
31 Aug at Resource & Training Centre

WAM Carnival

21 Sep at *SCAPE

ADA will be organising a full day World Alzheimer's Month (WAM) carnival on 21 September 2019. The event targets the general public, and aims to increase awareness of dementia in order to decrease the stigma associated with it. ADI's overarching global theme for WAM 2019 will be on dementia stigma, thus giving rise to our hashtag #DespiteDementia. The WAM carnival will be a full daytime affair with fun activities for the whole family!

Enabling EDIE™ Workshop

22 Nov at Resource & Training Centre

The information and dates listed here may be subjected to change. For the latest updates and full list of events, please visit alz.org.sg/events

34TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE INTERNATIONAL

In March 2020, the International Conference of Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) will be returning to Singapore after a 10-year hiatus. Jointly organised with ADA, ADI's flagship conference is expected to attract more than 1,500 delegates from around the world and it will be held from 19 to 21 March at the Singapore Expo. This year's theme is "Hope in the age of dementia: New science; New knowledge; New solutions".

The ADI Conference is the longest running and one of the largest international conferences on dementia, attracting over 1,000 delegates from over 100 countries at previous conferences. It will feature a range of international keynote speakers and a high standard of scientific and non-scientific content. The conference programme enables participants to learn about the latest advances and best practices



in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care and management of dementia.

Besides keynote speakers which include Prof. Martin Knapp (UK), Prof Miia Kivipelto (Finland), Dr. Lim Wee Shiong (Singapore), Dr. Kim Ki Woong (South Korea), Dr. Hamed AL Sinawi (Oman) and Dr Christopher Chen (Singapore), there will be persons with dementia and carers sharing their perspectives as well.

This unique, multi-disciplinary event will bring together

researchers, scientists, clinicians, allied healthcare professionals, people living with dementia, family caregivers, care professionals, community partners and stakeholders from across the globe.

The Scientific Programme Committee would like to invite authors to submit their abstracts. Visit adi2020.org today to find out the latest details on registration, abstract submission, and the conference programme. We hope you will join us for this exciting event!



WAM CARNIVAL

SAT,
21 SEP 2019,
11AM - 4PM
AT *SCAPE

The WAM Carnival is organised to commemorate World Alzheimer's Month and hopes to increase awareness of dementia and reduce the stigma associated with it.

WORLD ALZHEIMER'S MONTH 2019

Join us for a day of fun activities and programmes for the entire family! Get a free goodie bag, enjoy yummy offerings from our own ADA Café and participate in exciting games and activities. You can even snap a family picture at the fun photo booth or a selfie with our giant balloon brain. Browse through dementia related products and services, enjoy interactive performances, a movie screening and more.



BRAIN STIMULATION COULD REVERSE MEMORY DECLINE

Researchers from the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago, IL, have suggested in a new study that brain stimulation may help to restore the memories of seniors. The non-invasive method, known as transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), works by targeting a superficial brain area in the parietal lobe that connects with the hippocampus with magnetic fields. After receiving the TMS intervention, the seniors in the study scored the same as young adults typically would in the standardized memory tests. - medicalnewstoday.com

MUSHROOMS TO FIGHT MENTAL DECLINE

A study conducted by Researchers from the National University of Singapore (NUS) revealed that consuming more mushrooms may help stave off Alzheimer's Disease and other dementias by keeping one of its key symptoms at bay - cognitive decline. Conducted over seven years on more than 600 Chinese Singaporeans aged 60 and above, the study revealed that those who ate more than two servings of mushrooms a week - equivalent to 300g or about half a plate - were 57 per cent less likely to have mild cognitive impairment compared with those who ate less than one portion a week. This could be due to the high levels of ergothioneine found in mushrooms, a compound which acts as an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent that protects brain cells from damage. - channelnewsasia.com



CREATING A DEMENTIA-INCLUSIVE SOCIETY IN SINGAPORE

Results from the recent nationwide inclusive survey presented a clear call to action: More needs to be done to change the stigma present in our society. In a commentary published to Today Online, Mr Jason Foo, Chief Executive Officer at ADA, highlighted the Dementia Friendly Kiama Project and the German town of Arnsberg as shining examples of inclusion and assimilation that Singapore should aspire to. For Singapore, beefing up on the education of dementia is a good starting point, wrote Mr Foo. By including and engaging persons with dementia in whatever we do, and by taking cues from the success stories from Kiama and Arnsberg, Singapore can work towards cultivating dementia-friendly communities and be a more inclusive society. - todayonline.com

GAMING FOR DEMENTIA RESEARCH

Memory loss, while being a strong indicator of Alzheimer's Disease, has always been a late-stage symptom. Researchers are now leveraging on an earlier sign of dementia, poor spatial orientation, in order to determine dementia risk earlier. Developed by Deutsche Telekom and European universities, Sea Hero Quest is a dementia-friendly game which collects data that detect symptoms of the condition through a gameplay which involves memorising a map and navigating a virtual boat. Scientists say that just two minutes of gameplay generates the same amount of data it would take them five hours to collect in a lab setting. - scienceblog.com (IMAGE: Engadget)



MAKING HEART CONNECTIONS

In this issue, ADA Volunteer Mr Rajendra Gour meets Mr Paul Teo, 61 years old, a family caregiver to his mother, Madam Tan Yew Hwee. Madam Tan, 88 years old, has advanced Alzheimer's and attends the New Horizon Centre (Toa Payoh). Read Rajendra's insights, as he connects with Paul to learn about his caregiving journey.

A warm and simple greeting of "How are you?" broke the ice. Prior to meeting Paul, I had mixed feelings with a tinge of sadness; I was not sure what to expect. Yet, when I entered the New Horizon Centre (NHC) Toa Payoh, I was welcomed with smiles from the centre's care staff, and Paul's warm and friendly handshake. I immediately felt at ease and positivity took over as I observed the buzz of activities at the daycare centre.

Some five years ago, Paul retired as a Regional Manager at a multinational corporation in the automotive industry to spend more time with his family, especially his mother who has advanced Alzheimer's.

"Though she is now wheelchair-bound and has lost her memory to the extent that she does not recognise me sometimes, she lets me take care of her," Paul shares as he caressed Madam Tan's hand. "I talk to her whether she understands me or not. My family members too, connect with her including my younger sister who is based in the United States. She uses Facetime to talk to her every day without fail. As a family, we need to continue to engage with her – even sitting next to her makes a difference," he added.

Accepting Dementia

Paul shared what life was like for Madam Tan prior to her diagnosis 10 years ago. She led an active life; she enjoyed karaoke, mahjong, and was even a Qigong instructor. She was also the main caregiver to her three grandchildren. In 2009, the family realised that she was becoming more forgetful, even forgetting one of her most familiar activities – doing the grocery shopping for the family.



After the confirmed diagnosis at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Madam Tan was initially in denial, and thought it was just a normal part of ageing. However, things started deteriorating further. She started to hallucinate and was suspicious of things happening around her.

"The situation was overwhelming at times, but it was important that we accept it and educate ourselves on the condition. Learn to seek help from associations such as ADA who can support not only your loved ones with dementia, but also you as the caregiver," reveals Paul.

Getting Help and Support

Madam Tan was referred to ADA and became a client at NHC (Toa Payoh), which she enjoys attending. Paul sang his praises for the care staff, saying, "The professional care staff take on the person-centred care approach and really observe what my mum enjoys. For example, she enjoys a particular song and they often use that song to engage with her. Over time, they also realised that she has a strong maternal instinct, and so they often play dolls with her."

Paul's family also employed a foreign domestic worker (FDW) five years ago. Inevitably, there was initial resistance from Madam Tan. "My mum refused to accept the helper and showed her displeasure. We could tell that the helper was discouraged and hence we enrolled her to attend the Dementia Care Training Workshop for FDWs by ADA Academy. Over time, she became more confident in taking care of my mother and learned how to engage effectively with a person with dementia."

At home, safety measures are taken to ensure that Madam Tan does not fall or slip. A fall could hurt her body and may further damage her brain, and even cause a stroke. "Luckily, we have helping hands from the family members and a caring helper," he adds.



A strong believer that dementia care is a shared family responsibility, he entrusts Madam Tan's physical wellbeing to the helper, but remains firm that emotional and mental support must come from the family. To equip himself with the essential knowledge and skills to care for a person with dementia, Paul also participates in the Family Caregiver Training Programme and Caregiver Support Groups. "I think everyone should attend such workshops and know the nature of this condition which has no cure; read about it, attend awareness talks, and take the necessary action to prevent it or delay it," he shares.

Spread the word on Dementia

I took the chance to ask Paul how the community can help. His response was encouraging: "As the population of seniors increases, so too does the likelihood of dementia. I have told friends and relatives about dementia and encouraged them to remain physically and mentally active. Over the years, my family and I have been armed with more knowledge of dementia, and we do hope that more people will become aware of this condition and be ready to help."

His points resonated with me; I agreed that we should encourage building dementia-friendly communities where we can support each other. His



response to my comment was thoughtful.

"All of us hope to help our loved ones with dementia to live a dignified life. If anything, dementia has made my family more united, and we have a common objective to ensure my mother has a high quality of life. Through this caregiving journey, my family has become more cohesive and we understand each other better."

To me, it was clear that Paul loves his mother dearly. He wishes she will recover, but understands that there is currently no cure for this condition. He continues to seek solace in looking after her, making her as comfortable as he can with help from his family. During our two-hour chat, he was constantly looking out for his mother, touching her hand from time to time. He does not know whether she understands what is happening, but I do feel that he is making heart connections.

About ADA's New Horizon Centres

ADA's New Horizon Centres (NHCs) are dementia daycare centres providing services, support and respite to persons with dementia and their caregivers. They enable caregivers to pursue their livelihoods while being assured that their loved ones are well cared for. Our four NHCs emphasise the person-centred care (PCC) approach in dementia care, where each client is valued as a unique individual with varied interests and talents. The Centres also ensure that the dignity of our clients is maintained despite their condition.

For more information, visit alz.org.sg/nhc, email info@alz.org.sg, or call 6377 0700.

VOICES FOR HOPE



For communities to be inclusive, there is a need to hear the voices of persons with dementia and their caregivers. With the kind support of the National Council of Social Service, the “Voices For Hope” programme was piloted to empower persons with dementia in Singapore.

While there are prominent self-advocates for persons with dementia around the world, most of them tend to be reserved and conservative. Voices for Hope aims to enable persons with dementia to be confident and equipped with relevant skills to “step up” – to actively share their stories, needs, and views in public platforms.

On 16 March, ADA witnessed the first cohort’s graduation. It was very heartening to hear from the six pairs of caregivers and loved ones with dementia who shared that this programme has not only built their confidence to speak out, but has also helped them form tight bonds and friendships.

Upon graduation, each cohort is invited to be members of the Forget-Us-Not (FUN) Network, supported by the Lien Foundation, which continues to provide support, ongoing training, and speaking opportunities.

Eventually, ADA hopes that Voices for Hope will change societal attitudes and the landscape of how persons with

dementia are perceived and can be supported. It will also reduce the negative perception and stigma of dementia and shed new perspectives on the abilities of persons with dementia when they are empowered.



“There was a lot of sharing and learning from each other. I realised that there’s no right or wrong to share, and there’s really no end to learning.”

Peter Lee, person with dementia

“My mum, Katherine and I have always enjoyed and benefited from ADA programmes. When I attended Voices for Hope, I realised that it’s not the usual activity for our loved ones with dementia. This programme is a platform to give a voice for them, and my mum is more willing to speak out now.”

Caregiver Belinda Seet (left) and her mother Katherine Seet



“I joined Voices for Hope because my wife, Lai Quen was supportive of it. I really enjoyed the activities. From the programme, I heard other caregivers’ opinions too and I want to reassure them that, as a caregiver, you truly make a difference to us, your loved ones with dementia.”

Steven Lau, person with dementia and his wife Wong Lai Quen



JOIN US!

You and your loved ones with dementia can join Voices for Hope too! Write to Ruth Wong at ruthwong@alz.org.sg for more information.



DEMENTIA STIGMA STILL ALIVE AND WELL IN SINGAPORE

A survey by the Singapore Management University (SMU) and ADA sheds some light on the state of perception and awareness of the condition in Singapore, highlighting areas of improvement.

Results from the first national survey on dementia in Singapore highlight a need to continue increasing awareness of dementia in Singapore, and combat the stigma that surrounds the condition. Dubbed *Remember.For.Me*, the survey—a collaboration between SMU and ADA—aimed to build and analyse the Dementia Stigma Index (DSI) in Singapore. Ms Rosie Ching, Senior Lecturer of Statistics at SMU, and her 99 students gathered responses from more than 5,600 people, which included the general public, persons with dementia, and their caregivers.

Reflecting On Stigma

One revelation showed nearly 3 in 4 persons with dementia feel



At the presentation for *Remember.For.Me*, Alzheimer's Disease & Dementia Project by SMU Senior Lecturer of Statistics, Ms Rosie Ching (in red long-sleeved jacket) with her Statistics students and ADA CEO Mr Jason Foo (in white long-sleeved shirt) on 8 April.

rejection and loneliness, with half of the persons with dementia who felt that others acted like they were less competent.

Almost 60% of the general public and persons with dementia said "Yes" to incompetency in persons with dementia, a result which reinforces the need to continue combating dementia stigma in Singapore. In contrast, almost 90% of caregivers disagreed that loved ones with dementia are incompetent, a result that can perhaps be attributed to their personal experience of the condition.

The Importance Of Awareness

The need for more dementia education and awareness was also underlined with more than half (56%) of the general public rating themselves low in dementia knowledge, indicating discomfort when interacting with persons with dementia.

It was however encouraging to note that nearly 8 in 10 respondents were willing and wanted to do more to improve the lives of persons with dementia, with 7 in 10 agreeing that Singapore needs to provide more dementia-friendly amenities.

Professor Lim Kian Guan, Vice Provost of Undergraduate Matters at SMU shared his thoughts on the survey: "Through this project, students gained a deep, immersive, and practical hands-on experience of applying statistical methods to analyse the realities of Alzheimer's disease and dementia beyond the classroom. We hope our statistical findings will spur Singaporeans to learn more about what can be done to improve the lives of those living with dementia, as well as that of caregivers."

Ever since my 62-year-old dad has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease, he seemed to have lost interest in our usual family traditions like decorating the house for Lunar New Year. This lack of enthusiasm extends to holidays as well. Is this a case of holiday blues? How can I as a caregiver help make the holiday season more enjoyable for him?

There can be various reasons why a person with dementia may seem to have lost interest in activities they used to enjoy.

One of the first things we try to do, is to ensure that the person is not going through an accompanying mood disorder such as depression. You can look out for associated symptoms such as a persistent sad mood, teariness, changes in appetite or sleep patterns, and verbalisation that there is a lack of meaning or purpose in life.

Secondly, dementia itself can be associated with apathy. Apathy is a loss of motivation to do things, or a lack of interest in things. This is unintentional and is related to changes in the brain. There can be similar features between depression and apathy, and they can be difficult to tell apart. However, one significant

difference is that in apathy, the person seems mostly indifferent, while in depression, there should be feelings of sadness and hopelessness.

Thirdly, it is important to understand that for a person with dementia, it can be frightening and devastating to realise that you are no longer able to carry out previously effortless activities as well as before. This can lead to a loss of self-confidence and self-esteem. This can be expressed as a seeming disinterest in activities. Having many things happen concurrently during holiday seasons can also be disorienting and stressful for a person with

dementia. The resulting anxiety and confusion can also manifest as them not participating readily in activities.

As a caregiver, it is important to work with your medical team (if necessary) to try to figure out which of the above reasons applies most to your family member with dementia and thereafter, try to address the underlying issue(s).

Often, it is the third reason. If so, going slow, with lots of positive encouragement and appropriate facilitation will help greatly in reducing anxiety and rebuilding confidence.



All advice given is based on the information available to us in the questions sent in. As every person with dementia and their situation is unique, we strongly advise calling the ADA Helpline at 6377 0700 for help.

THE EXPERT



DR CHEN SHILING is a physician with special interests in dementia and adults with intellectual disability. She is deeply passionate about improving the lives of both populations and is currently working with Khoo Teck Puat Hospital and Tsao Foundation Community for Successful Ageing (ComSA) in providing care for persons with dementia, and their families. She is also the founder of "Happie Hearts Movement", which advocates and provides for the medical needs of adults with intellectual disability.

Dr Chen is currently a member of the Management Committee of ADA and also serves in our Programmes and Services Sub-Committee. She is also a member of several Sub-Committees and serves on the Healthcare Working Group of Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS). Concurrently, she is also a member of the Association for Persons with Special Needs (APSN) Allied Professional Advisory Committee. Dr Chen is also an appointed member of the Adult Protection Team (APT).

Beyond The Numbers

More than three months of intense work was put into this study, survey, and analysis, which has helped to highlight areas which should be worked on to improve the quality of life for persons with dementia in Singapore. Expressing his gratitude to Ms Rosie and her students, Mr Jason Foo said, "I want to acknowledge all the hard work done by Ms Rosie Ching and the undergraduates from her Statistics module, who spent many months on this nationwide survey, investing time and effort to develop the questions with ADA, conducting the interviews and putting these presentations together."

REMINISCING AND RETRACING HIS PARENTS' PAST



Together with Mr K. Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law & MP for Nee Soon GRC, Adviser to Nee Soon Town Council.

In light of his parents who were diagnosed with dementia, Mr Sunny Ng decided to recollect the stories of his kampung in the 1960/70s, the Chye Kay Village, before it was too late. “Dementia made me realise that if we do not take action to document their former lives, a piece of history will be lost to us forever,” shared Sunny, who specialises in illustration.

Sunny started gathering photos of his kampung since 2014. During this time, he realised that the old photos were able to trigger a lot of his mother's memories. From the conceptualisation, story boarding, and curating this graphic book, it took a cohesive community to come together and contribute kampung stories and photos before “Retracing Footsteps Home...Chye Kay Village” was published in 2018.

With a magnanimous spirit, Sunny wanted to do more. He came to know about ADA, and together with a team, he kickstarted a series of fundraising efforts to raise awareness on dementia and donations for the association. “ADA is truly blessed to have individuals like Sunny to champion our cause through fundraising and advocacy. I am particularly impressed with the “kampong spirit” exhibited by so many people in this project. We are indeed grateful and look forward to have more

onboard to join us in these outreach efforts!”, recounted Alice Wong, Head of Fundraising. Thus far, almost \$34,000 was raised from various platforms including his alumni gatherings at the former Lee Cheng Primary School and North Vista Secondary School.

From 9 to 10 March 2019, in conjunction with the Singapore Bicentennial Project, Chong Pang Community Club Management Committee (CCMC) co-organised an impressive art exhibition titled, “Retracing footsteps: From Chong Pang City to Chye Kay Village”. It allowed everyone in the community to reminisce the past and appreciate how much the community has grown today.

“It was truly emotional for me when I saw how much everyone was eagerly looking through the exhibits – I didn't expect that there will be so many people who shared my sentiments about reliving those days in a kampung,” Sunny shared.



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(<http://bit.ly/2T27HZW>)
for more details.



STAYING SHARP IN RETIREMENT

After 10 years as the Regional and subsequently, Global Healthcare Nutrition Science Director at Danone, Madam Yee Fui Tai, a Registered Dietician, is looking forward to spending more time with friends and family as well as pursuing her various other interests. We spoke with her on her plans for retirement and gained some valuable insights on how to maintain an active mind and body.

Q: As many as 1 in 10 adults in Singapore will develop dementia over their lifetimes. Can you explain what happens when our brains age?

A: Our brains communicate via a vast network of connections known as synapses. Throughout our lifetimes, our brains continuously lose and replace its synapses. However, as we grow older, the process may become unbalanced with more connections lost than replaced. This leads to impaired memory. Almost 40% of people over the age of 65 will experience some form of memory loss. When there is no underlying medical condition, this is known as ‘age-associated memory impairment’. Dementia is an illness which causes brain cells to be damaged at a faster rate than is associated with normal ageing.

Q. Do you think nutritional supplements are necessary as we age?

A: Yes, because many older adults have challenges in eating a healthy balanced diet with sufficient quantities of the recommended food groups to obtain the right amount of nutrients. This could be due to reduced physical activity leading to lower caloric requirement, chronic diseases and other factors.

Q: What nutrients are essential for keeping us alert and our memories in tip top shape?

A: Energy as well as nutrients are required to keep us alert. I will highlight a few of the key ones. **Phospholipids** are a class of lipids and a major component of brain cell membrane. **Omega 3 fatty acids – DHA, EPA and uridine monophosphate (UMP)**, a nucleotide, are important building blocks for phospholipids.

Choline helps in the production of acetylcholine, a key neurotransmitter in the brain, responsible for learning, sustaining attention and memory. Neurotransmitters are like vehicles which carry signals from one part of the brain to another. An insufficient concentration of acetylcholine has been shown to be associated with memory loss associated with Alzheimer's disease.

Vitamin B6 is significant for protein, carbohydrate and fat metabolism to generate energy and also produce neurotransmitters.

Vitamin B12 plays a role in the synthesis of myelin – an insulating layer around our nerves. This insulating layer plays an important role in ensuring that electrical impulses can travel back and forth from the brain to the various parts of the body efficiently.

Q: How can nutritional supplements help with brain health?

A: The advantage of nutritional supplements is that we can obtain the right combination at the right levels of specific nutrients to help the formation of new synapses or connections and thus, to maintain brain function.

Q: What does your daily diet look like?

A: My diet resembles the typical recommended diet that helps keep me fit and prevents chronic diseases. It is low in fat and sodium but high in fibre as my diet is heavily plant-based. I have fish like salmon at least thrice a week. I enjoy soy milk and bean curd which are good sources of protein and B group vitamins. I do not over eat and keep an eye on my BMI.

Q: Outside of supplements, what tips do you have to keep yourself mentally alert and physically agile?

A: Brisk walking is my daily exercise and I target at least 10,000 steps per day. I enjoy reading and playing the piano. My favourite pastime is watching international documentaries and drama on Netflix. During the weekends, I sometimes bake healthy bread.

Q: What are you most looking forward to doing now that you have more time?

A: I plan to travel to visit my children who are working overseas. I will also spend more time with my mum who is 96 years old and lives with my siblings in Malaysia. My incredible mum is still mentally, physically and socially active. She eats a varied diet and takes nutrient supplements regularly. Her hobby is to walk around her garden and admire the flowers, fruits and vegetables.

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CRAFTING RELAXING SHOWERS

These simple lavender shower tablets are a joy to make – and to use.

Lavender is well appreciated for the pleasant and relaxing atmosphere which it creates. Its effect is thought to balance strong emotions, and it can be used to help with depression, anger, and irritability in persons with dementia.

What's more, lavender shower tablets are easy to make, and is a relaxing craft activity that you and your loved one can spend time doing together. Let the scent of lavender wash over you as you're crafting, and then keep it aside for days you want to make bath time a special treat.

What You Need:

- 2 cups baking soda
- 1/2 cup water, plus a little more if needed
- Lavender essential oil (can be replaced with any scent you prefer)
- Heatproof moulds in your preferred shape (should be a comfortable size to hold)

Steps:

1. Combine baking soda with enough water to make a paste that holds together without being runny.
2. Pack the paste into small moulds
3. Preheat oven to 175°C and bake the moulds for about 15-20 minutes.
4. Remove and let the moulds cool. Don't worry if the tablets still seem damp at this stage, they will continue drying as they cool.
5. Sprinkle a few drops of essential oil on each tablet, and allow to soak in.
6. Store the tablets in an air-tight jar until you want to use them.
7. Place it on a shelf in the shower. The steam from the water will help to release the scent slowly. Alternatively, you can break a small piece off and place it in a shallow bowl of warm water in the bathroom before shower time, to have it ready and smelling nice.



SPICY THERAPY

Whether mild or fiery, Kimchi is a delicious addition to your meal, whether as a dish on its own or as an ingredient. Even better, the main ingredients used to make kimchi are rich in various antioxidants that are believed to alleviate the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. Be sure to check that your kimchi is unpasteurised – the live cultures are what provides most of the beneficial effects!

A Boost To Immunity

Being rich in antioxidants, kimchi is a great way of giving your immune system a boost, so you'll have a better time keeping your body in top form.

Pro-probiotics

Kimchi contains a probiotic that's been shown to protect the brain against memory loss. Between that and the increasing research that shows a link between digestive health and brain function, there's more reason than ever to be pro-kimchi.

Reduced inflammation

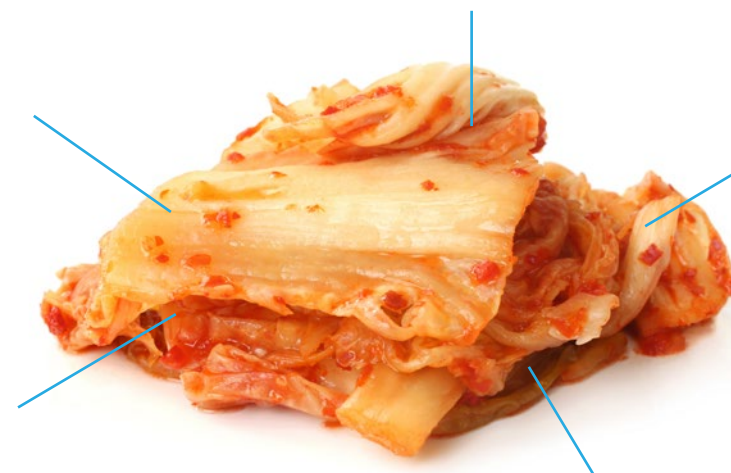
An acid in Kimchi has been found to reduce inflammation, which goes a long way to alleviate the risk of dementia.

Lower cholesterol

Kimchi is also helpful in decreasing your cholesterol reserves, improving your vascular health; if you already suffer from high cholesterol levels, adding kimchi to your meals will help to control it.

Fighting back ulcers

The helpful bacteria found in kimchi is great at preventing gastric and peptic ulcers. If you have a history of stomach ulcers, kimchi will also help to reduce the chance of recurrence.



RECIPE

KIMCHI PANCAKE Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 cup kimchi, drained and chopped
- 1/2 cup reserved juice from kimchi
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 green onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1/2 teaspoon Korean chilli pepper flakes (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon toasted sesame seeds (optional)

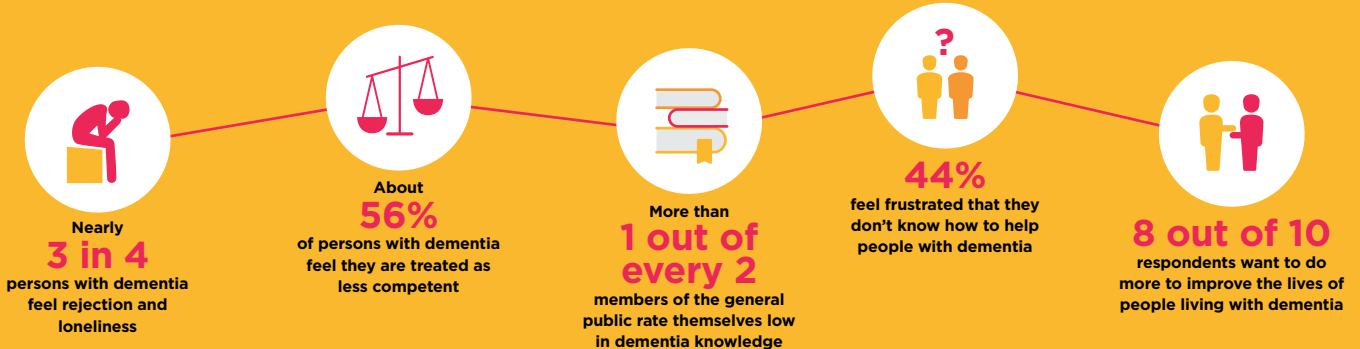
Directions

1. Stir the kimchi, kimchi juice, flour, eggs, and green onion together in a large bowl
2. Heat vegetable oil over medium heat in a large skillet. Using about 1/4 cup of batter for each pancake, pour the batter into the skillet, spreading it as thin as possible. Cook pancakes until they are set and lightly browned, turning once, 3 to 5 minutes per side. Season to taste with salt.
3. Whisk the rice vinegar, soy sauce, sesame oil, chilli pepper flakes, and toasted sesame seeds together. Serve as a dip with the pancakes.

Recipe and image from allrecipes.com



DEMENTIA NUMBERS IN SINGAPORE



Statistics from *Remember.For.Me*, a Singapore Management University (SMU) statistics project in collaboration with Alzheimer's Disease Association

ADA in Singapore

We strive to be the leader in dementia daycare and a voice for persons with dementia and their caregivers, with a vision towards a dementia-inclusive society. Established in 1990, we seek to enable persons with dementia and their families to live with dignity by providing quality care and support through research, education, and training.

Dementia Helpline

☎ 6377 0700
🕒 Monday - Friday: 9.00am - 6.00pm

Resource & Training Centre

📍 70 Bendemeer Road
#06-02 Luzerne Building,
Singapore 339940
🕒 Monday - Friday: 9.00am - 6.00pm

Caregiver Support Centre

📍 70 Bendemeer Road
#03-02A Luzerne Building,
Singapore 339940
🕒 Monday - Friday: 9.00am - 6.00pm

ADA Café

📍 7A Lorong 8 Toa Payoh
#01-01 Agape Village
Singapore 319264
🕒 Monday - Friday: 8.30am - 5.30pm

Family of Wisdom (Bendemeer)

📍 72 Bendemeer Road
#05-29 Luzerne Building,
Singapore 339941
🕒 Monday - Friday: 9.00am - 6.00pm

Family of Wisdom (Tiong Bahru)

📍 298 Tiong Bahru Road
#10-05 Central Plaza,
Singapore 168730
🕒 Monday - Friday: 8.30am - 5.30pm

Family of Wisdom (Toa Payoh)

📍 7A Lorong 8 Toa Payoh
#01-01,
Singapore 319264
🕒 Monday - Friday: 8.30am - 5.30pm

New Horizon Centre (Bukit Batok)

📍 Blk 511 Bukit Batok Street 52, #01-211,
Singapore 650511
🕒 Monday - Friday: 7.30am - 6.30pm

New Horizon Centre (Jurong Point)

📍 1 Jurong West Central 2 #04-04
Jurong Point Shopping Centre,
Singapore 648886
🕒 Monday - Friday: 7.30am - 6.30pm

New Horizon Centre (Tampines)

📍 Blk 362 Tampines Street 34, #01-377,
Singapore 520362
🕒 Monday - Friday: 7.30am - 6.30pm

New Horizon Centre (Toa Payoh)

📍 Blk 157 Toa Payoh Lorong 1, #01-1195,
Singapore 310157
🕒 Monday - Friday: 7.30am - 6.30pm

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