

MEDIA RELEASE

**Young onset dementia cases on the rise, even as overall
dementia cases in Singapore drop**

Dementia Singapore to raise more awareness of young onset dementia and will partner Sentosa Development Corporation to bring the condition to light



*Mr Quek Ee Meng, a person with Young Onset Dementia, with his wife and care partner, Ms Alice Tan, visiting the Sentosa Sensoryscape
[Photo: Dementia Singapore]*

[Singapore, 4 September 2024] - More Singapore residents are experiencing symptoms of dementia at an earlier age, according to latest figures from National Neuroscience Institute (NNI) at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH).

Young-onset dementia (YOD) refers to dementia affecting those aged 65 and below. In 2023, NNI saw around 330 cases in total of YOD. Of that figure, about 90 were new, up from 60 in 2013.

While overall dementia cases in Singapore have trended downwards, according to a recent Institute of Mental Health study, numbers for YOD are the exception.

An estimated 3,700 people in Singapore have young-onset dementia. Many are still working and have young families when they are diagnosed, according to a previous study by the NNI. They make up about five per cent of the estimated 73,000 persons living with dementia in Singapore - although it is expected that by 2030, 150,000 people will be affected by dementia.

Mr Jason Foo, CEO of Dementia Singapore, said: “Dementia is an age-related brain condition, so it usually affects the elderly, and the risk increases with age. However, what is worrying is that it is now affecting younger people, aged 50 and below.”

Dementia Singapore also released a survey it commissioned research firm Milieu Insight to shed more light on people’s attitudes and thoughts about YOD.

The survey, which polled 1,000 people from the age of 16 to above 55, revealed that:

- More than nine in 10 of respondents are aware that dementia does not just affect people who are 65 and above;
- Forgetfulness is the main characteristic people identify with those suffering from dementia;
- More than half of the respondents (55%) will consider doing cognitive screenings for YOD if they notice any related symptoms - although affordability and fear of a positive diagnosis were cited as reasons they may not do so;
- The survey also revealed that while there is a healthy awareness of YOD, only a quarter of respondents are aware of the resources available in Singapore to support a person with YOD.

Dr Chiew Hui Jin, Consultant, Department of Neurology, NNI, said: “The rise in YOD cases may in part be due to the greater awareness of YOD among the general public, as this means more younger people are willing to seek help.”

However, the actual figures might be higher, as people with YOD tend to receive alternative diagnoses such as anxiety or depression. As such, it is important that young people are willing to go for cognitive screenings for YOD if they notice any related symptoms.

Mr Quek Ee Meng, was 56 when his wife, part-time mathematics tutor Ms Alice Tan, 55, realised that he had started keeping to himself and barely talked. He had started going to her for help to solve basic mathematics questions and eventually, he stopped responding to her. She convinced him to get his health checked out and after being referred to Khoo Teck Puat Hospital in June 2023, a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan revealed that Mr Quek had Alzheimer's Disease.

Mr Quek, who was a freelance mathematics tutor before his diagnosis, saw his active lifestyle rapidly change and he was no longer able to continue working. While Mr Quek still goes for runs daily in the estate equipped with three different location trackers, his wife started looking into activities for persons living with YOD to keep his mind active and engaged.

Ms Tan said: "My husband went through a period of depression and fully kept quiet. He did not want to meet up with his friends and he did not want his family members to know about the diagnosis. For me, I was very shocked when the doctor told me it was young-onset dementia. I have a daughter who is working and a son still in university, and we started to worry. I had my time of crying for over two weeks. Our children were able to accept it and sometimes they do console me. I (also) told him (my husband) that in the end, his siblings are his family, and we cannot keep them in the dark."

Through other care partners they met at NNI, the couple was introduced to Dementia Singapore and their array of programmes for persons living with dementia, including Voices for Hope.

Piloted in 2019, Voices for Hope is a 10-week programme that equips participants with relevant skills and fosters confidence in them to actively share their stories, their needs and views publicly.

Having completed the programme, Ms Tan said: "During these activities, he started to love singing. He enjoys that very much because he gets to meet other people, and he knows he is not alone. And that's the moment I can see him make a lot of noise. I can see that he really enjoys himself and he is so proud when we perform as a choir. He becomes a totally different person, and that's the happy side of us."



DEMENTIA SINGAPORE PARTNERING SENTOSA TO RAISE DEMENTIA AWARENESS

Dementia Singapore is also partnering Sentosa Development Corporation (SDC) to further raise awareness of dementia through regular scheduled talks on living with Dementia and guided tours of Sentosa Sensoryscape.

In addition, Sentosa is a new partner for Dementia Singapore's #ShineForDementia initiative in which organisations illuminate their buildings in purple and yellow tones to commemorate World Alzheimer's Day every 21 September.

This year, the Glow Garden and Lookout Loop at Sentosa Sensoryscape will be part of #ShineForDementia, along with the Singapore Sports Hub, the National Gallery, as well as Fraser Property Singapore's Northpoint City, The Centrepoint, Century Square and White Sands.

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About Dementia Singapore

Dementia Singapore was formed in 1990 as Alzheimer's Disease Association to better serve Singapore's growing dementia community, increase awareness about dementia, and reduce the stigma surrounding the condition. As Singapore's leading Social Service Agency in specialised dementia care, Dementia Singapore aims to advocate for the needs of people living with dementia and their families; and empower the community through capability-building, knowledge, and consultancy; as well as deliver quality person-centred care innovations. For more information, visit www.dementia.org.sg.

About Milieu Insight

Milieu Insight is a leading survey software company in Southeast Asia, dedicated to helping brands and businesses build consumer engagement ecosystems that deliver agile and actionable business insights. The company has garnered accolades such as Campaign Asia's Tech MVP and is renowned for its award-winning research expertise. At the core of its offerings is its powerful survey and data analytics software, Canvas, which provides intuitive tools for survey design and distribution, data analysis, visualization, and reporting business insights across various topics and sectors - This empowers businesses to make informed, impactful decisions and develop effective strategies.

About Sentosa Development Corporation

Sentosa Development Corporation (SDC) was established on 1 September 1972 as a Statutory Board under the Ministry of Trade and Industry. As a master planner, its charter since inception has been to oversee the development, management, marketing, and promotion of the island of Sentosa as a resort destination for locals and tourists.

As part of its business subsidiaries, SDC wholly owns Sentosa Cove Resort Management Pte Ltd and Sentosa Golf Club Pte Ltd. SDC also owns the Singapore Cable Car Network, managed by Mount Faber Leisure Group Pte Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary which operates as an autonomous commercial arm.

As a testament to its commitment to sustainability, SDC has been conferred with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council – For Destinations (GSTC-D) certificate, making Sentosa the first island destination in Asia to receive this accolade.

Dementia Singapore

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Annex A: Perception towards Dementia (with specific focus on Young Onset Dementia) by [Dementia Singapore and Milieu Insight in August 2024](#)

Annex B: About Sentosa Sensoryscape

Sentosa Sensoryscape is Sentosa Island's newest ridge to reef passageway for unmatched discoveries. Located at the heart of Sentosa, the 30,000sqm Sentosa Sensoryscape, which is approximately the size of 5.5 football fields, serves as the main artery linking Resorts World Sentosa in the north to Sentosa's beaches in the south through a multi-sensory experience. Inspired by Sentosa's natural wonders, such as the island's lush tropical landscape, Sentosa Sensoryscape will feature a series of immersive sensory gardens. Each of these is framed by signature architectural features with a semi-enclosed sensory garden that invites guests to let their senses wander while offering spaces for contemplative appreciation of the surroundings. Set to pique and amplify one of the five senses through various elements such as polyphonic water features, mist, as well as plant species with unique scents, this immersive, day to night experiential attraction is a seamless blend of lush surrounding and man-made spaces aims to invigorate the soul of guests. The first milestone of the decades-long Sentosa-Brani Master Plan, Sentosa Sensoryscape inspires guests to discover more of Sentosa, with new opportunities and experiences to delight guests all year round.

The press kit can be found [here](#).