

Community healthcare for Persons with Dementia and Frail elderly for their continued wellness in Singapore – the urgent need for increased public education and ramping up of appropriate services

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Abstract

Singapore's approach to the demographic challenges was laid in the 1980s, some two decades after independence in 1965. A number of high-level committees were formed to look at issues related to ageing. These included: the Committee on the Problems of the Aged (1982), the Advisory Council on the Aged (1988–1989), the National Advisory of Council on the Family and the Aged (1989–1998), and the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on Health and Care for the Elderly (1997–1999).

The benefits on continued living in the community, for persons with dementia, has been proven in numerous studies in an exhaustive manner. Singapore has adopted various principles of 'Ageing-in-place' and developed a range of services to allow seniors to continue to live in the community. The firm belief is that 'Ageing is not just the concern of a specific segment of society but a whole-of-society issue.'

Jamiyah Singapore started in 2002 a residential facility for seniors requiring some nursing care and assistance with their activities of daily living. However, capacity was limited and with the growing number of seniors needing care, options of community care were considered. With encouragement from the government, Jamiyah Singapore opened its Senior Day Care Centre in Feb 2016 and also started its Integrated Home and Day Care service. These services were designed not only to care for seniors needing a lower level of care and monitoring of them medical, physical and mental well-being but to also provide an opportunity for seniors, especially those with dementia) to socialise and interact with others in a safe environment. The only other option for these seniors with dementia would have been to stay home alone or with hired caregivers, with the likelihood of early onset of depression and loss of muscle strength in their limbs due to reduced movement. The benefits of interaction and socialisation were seen almost immediately. Seniors who were initially reluctant to attend the centre and felt that their family would 'abandon' them there, started to slowly interact with other seniors, join exercise and 'movement to music' sessions, found buddies with similar interests and showed enthusiasm in doing activities initiated by the staff.

Jamiyah Singapore also expanded to provide courses for active seniors, thus developing a group of senior volunteers. Activities and talks /workshops to educate and support caregivers were also arranged on legal and other caregiving aspects. In 2019, it was also registered as a Centre providing formalised education to caregivers in various aspects of caregiving, thus empowering them with knowledge and skills.

Biography:

Mr Tiwari has spearheaded and operationalised four Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs), piloted the first Home Help Service and Dementia Day Care Centre, and developed numerous community-based programmes and initiatives in Singapore. Having been a Senior-Level Executive in VWOs for over 30 years, Mr Tiwari has earned a formidable reputation in relation to his expertise in initiating and institutionalising significant programmes with highly capable management skills, and ability to develop longstanding commercial, inter-agency and client relationships. His proven track record in the eldercare market (and the wider VWO sector) coupled with his stellar management skills have enabled him to catalyse significant organisational growth, implement cost-effective strategies, and remain at the forefront of the industry. He has piloted and operationalised more than 50 programme for the elderly.

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