

NUS Medicine students promote dementia detection at Queenstown event

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When his grandmother misplaced her things often, Mr Marius Sim suspected it was something more serious.

She was diagnosed with dementia after visiting a clinic, and Mr Sim's family had to learn how to manage her condition as caregivers.

Mr Sim, 19, was one of more than 50 students from the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (NUS Medicine) engaging seniors on Dec 6 at Queenstown Community Centre.

They were there to promote early dementia detection and geriatric mental health awareness.

Free health screenings were done for Queenstown residents aged 50 and above, evaluating their cognitive, behavioural, physical and social well-being.

The one-day event is part of Pro-

ject iRemember, which is a community health initiative started by NUS medical students in 2015.

Speaking about his grandmother who lives with his family, Mr Sim said: "We had to step up and keep a constant eye on her, making sure she didn't forget to shower or eat. There are many basic things that people take for granted."

Mr Sim said his experience made him realise how important it is to treat the elderly with dementia with compassion.

Dementia affects one in 11 Singaporeans aged 60 and above. Half of those aged 85 and above live with the condition.

Trained volunteers and NUS Medicine students at the event guided participants, with on-site doctor consultations for urgent cases.

The students also referred seniors to suitable resources, like a nearby general practitioner or the project's HealthyMinds programme. The programme offers

mind-stimulating exercises and activities to boost social interaction among the senior participants.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Social and Family Development Eric Chua attended the event.

Medical student and Project iRemember's director Lim Zhi Qi said some seniors struggle with taking the first step to getting help or even

joining an active ageing centre, as it is unfamiliar to them.

Said the 20-year-old: "Being in a new environment can be intimidating. So our aim of hosting our own active ageing programme is to engage them in a more casual way that allows them to be more socially active and open up to the idea of using resources like active ageing centres."

Participants were also taught about identifying signs of dementia, where to get help, and caregiver burnout.

One senior, who wanted to be known only as Madam Leah, 67, lives alone in a nearby flat. Her husband died in 2019, and her daughter lives abroad.

After heart bypass surgery in 2024, she stopped working and

spends her days at home.

She said: "I worry about getting sick often. If I have to deal with something like dementia, how will I survive by myself? Nobody is around to help me."

"At least if I know the signs, I know what to look out for on my own."

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PREVENTING DEMENTIA

- Staying mentally active through reading, puzzles, and games like mahjong
- Maintaining a regular sleep schedule with seven to nine hours' sleep each night
- Exercising regularly to boost blood flow to the brain
- Eating healthy and choosing food with less sodium, fat and sugar
- Staying connected and interacting with family, friends and neighbours



Elderly participants at Project iRemember 2025, a community health initiative led by NUS Medicine students to promote early dementia detection, at Queenstown Community Centre on Dec 6. ST PHOTO: AZMI ATHNI