



## Service Priorities and Programmes Electronic Presentations

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### **Healthy Buddies\_Y&S (youth and senior): An Innovative Intergenerational Chronic Disease Empowerment Program**

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#### **Introduction**

Chronic disease, a major public health burden, is causally related to unhealthy lifestyles or risk behavior. This is a community and school based chronic disease awareness and empowerment program, which uses an innovative teaching model by partnering youth with chronic disease patients and focuses on encouraging healthy attitudes and behaviors in three key areas of health namely physical activity, healthy diet and mental wellness.

#### **Objectives**

1. To empower patients with chronic disease on interventional lifestyle modification to achieve better disease control; 2. To educate secondary school students on healthy lifestyles and increase awareness in chronic disease prevention. 3. To encourage both youth and senior in adopting healthy attitudes and behaviors in three key areas of health, including regular physical activity, healthy diet and mental wellness.

#### **Methodology**

There was pairing of secondary school students with elderly and/or disadvantaged patients with chronic disease to form a healthy buddy team, who all went through a series of chronic disease empowerment journey lasting for 5 months, focusing on chronic disease management and prevention, physical activity, healthy diet and mental wellness. Health workshop included chronic disease focusing mainly on diabetes and hypertension knowledge-based quiz games, practical exercise training, recipes on healthy diet modification with food tasting to increase participants' team engagement. Day camp activities such as hunting games and fall prevention drama skit competition, were specially-designed by healthcare professionals to enhance students' compassionate aspect in caring for elderly. Students also conducted life review interviews with their elder buddies including optional home visits. Using their creativity, they designed life review books in various formats and gave one "special"

gift exemplifying the elder's "positive traits" to their paired elder buddies. This inspiring journey will culminate with student reflection forum and "Life Review Book and Gift-giving" ceremony with the elderly.

### **Result**

30 patients with chronic diseases and 60 secondary students completed the program conducted from January to May, 2015. Intergenerational interaction, mutual support and life sharing were facilitated and encouraged throughout the whole program. The post-evaluation surveys have shown increased in self-esteem and mental wellness in both elderly and youth using Rosenberg self-esteem scale and WHO-5, respectively. Both groups also improved in their healthy behaviors with eating more vegetables, fruits and increased physical activity. The perception of the elderly towards the young also improved especially in the vitality and maturity domains using AGED scale. According to reflection from students, they appreciated the learning and sharing opportunity with seniors besides healthy lifestyle and chronic disease prevention awareness. From the senior's perspective, they were not only empowered on chronic disease management, but it also enhanced psychosocial wellness. Healthy buddies had bridged the generation gap, attained mutual understanding and warmheartedness. This innovative model of health promotion program benefitting both senior patients with chronic diseases and adolescent youth highlights the evolving concept in chronic disease self-management and empowerment.