



PRESS RELEASE

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Vintage perspectives: NUS students produce book on seniors' experiences with Singapore's healthcare system

The book aims to highlight the growing elderly population's increasing need for healthcare professionals and support for eldercare facilities, and encourage inter-generational bonding

Singapore, 2 June 2018 — A book compilation of short stories, titled '*Looking through the Silver Mirror*', was unveiled at Canopy @ J-Link today. The stories were written by students from various faculties of the National University of Singapore (NUS), after interviewing and interacting with a multi-racial and multi-religious group of seniors from Metta Welfare Association and Presbyterian Community Services.

The students from NUS' faculties of Medicine, Science, as well as Arts and Social Sciences collaborated and interviewed the seniors during their school holiday from May to August 2017. They also engaged a team of reviewers, including Yale-NUS College's humanities and liberal arts students, to edit the stories. Subsequently, the students invited the seniors to Gardens by the Bay as a token of appreciation for their time.

'*Looking through the Silver Mirror*' is structured into different stories, each featuring an elderly's life story. The first section of the story will tell a unique aspect of a senior's past as well as their outlook on life, followed subsequently by a discussion of their challenges navigating Singapore's healthcare system, and ending with a reflection piece by the respective student-writer on his experience with the elderly. The book also features a 'Communication Primer', which provides youth readers with useful tips on interacting with seniors.

This book aims to foster inter-generational bonding between the elderly and Singaporean youths through these heartfelt, personal stories. It also advocates careers in healthcare for the eldercare sector, which is currently facing a shortage of skilled staff.

"It is a privilege to be part of this groundbreaking project. The team initiated this project because of Singapore's ageing population, and the dearth of youths considering careers in eldercare, especially in the allied health professions. We also believe that the project would encourage inter-professional collaboration between future healthcare workers, which is critical for caring for an ageing population with multi-faceted needs", said Mr Gabriel Wong, project director and third-year student at NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (NUS Medicine).

"Many of the seniors featured in this book face life challenges – some have movement disorders like Parkinson's disease, others have chronic conditions such as diabetes, while a

few have financial and social difficulties. Many of these anecdotes are deeply moving and enlightening. They highlight the resilience of the human spirit of our seniors, who faced tough times in Singapore's nation-building years and are today still demonstrating that same tenacity in overcoming their health and social challenges. These are stories of fighters from which we can learn much from," said Ms Denise Phua, Mayor of Central Community Development Council (CDC), who wrote the foreword for the book. Ms Phua was also the Guest-of-Honour at the book launch.

During the book launch, the team brought together performances by both youth groups, such as a guitar band from School of the Arts, and seniors, such as Bishan Ukers, to celebrate the spirit of inter-generational understanding and empowerment of seniors. There were booths by senior advocacy organisations such as Ageless Online, Senior Savvy and Project Happy Club from Youth Corps.

In addition to the publication of the book, the team is also working with a senior, who is also a videographer, to capture videos of seniors at their partner charities, such as Presbyterian Community Services. The video, which features interesting stories of seniors, will be uploaded on the team's social media pages to engage youths.

In March to May 2018, the team also held talks at three schools and reached out to more than 100 students, inviting students from the various NUS faculties, as well as physiotherapy and occupational therapy students from the Singapore Institute of Technology, to share the challenges of various healthcare professions from a student's perspective.

"Collaboration in healthcare has been shown to improve patient outcomes. Not surprisingly, the World Health Organization has published a framework which highlights inter-professional education as a necessary step in preparing a 'collaborative practice-ready' health workforce that is better prepared to respond to local health needs. Ethics is a key component of inter-professional education, and it is deeply concerned with what respect for patients, their caregivers and fellow colleagues could mean in collaborative practice. Through *'Looking through the Silver Mirror'*, our students have shared with us in a very personal way how a sense of respect has been formed through interacting with our seniors, and as part of their journey to becoming future healthcare providers. Through this platform, they are also reaching out to their peers to embark on this important reflective journey," said Assistant Professor Calvin Ho from the Centre for Biomedical Ethics at NUS Medicine. He is an academic advisor for this project.

The project was funded by the Lee Foundation, National Youth Council's Young ChangeMakers Fund and NUS Medicine's Interprofessional Education Committee, with literary advice of Ms Eleanor Yap, the Director of Ageless Online, guidance from academic advisors from the respective NUS faculties, and doctors who reviewed the book.

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About the National University of Singapore (NUS)

A leading global university centred in Asia, the National University of Singapore (NUS) is Singapore's flagship university, which offers a global approach to education and research, with a focus on Asian perspectives and expertise.

NUS has 17 Faculties and Schools across three campuses. Its transformative education includes a broad-based curriculum underscored by multidisciplinary courses and cross-faculty enrichment. Over 38,000 students from 100 countries enrich the community with their diverse social and cultural perspectives. NUS also strives to create a supportive and innovative environment to promote creative enterprise within its community.

NUS takes an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to research, working with partners from industry, government and academia, to address crucial and complex issues relevant to Asia and the world. Researchers in NUS' Faculties and Schools, 30 university-level research institutes and centres, and Research Centres of Excellence cover a wide range of themes including: energy, environmental and urban sustainability; treatment and prevention of diseases common among Asians; active ageing; advanced materials; risk management and resilience of financial systems. The University's latest research focus is to use data science, operations research and cybersecurity to support Singapore's Smart Nation initiative.

For more information on NUS, please visit www.nus.edu.sg.

About the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (NUS Medicine)

Established in 1905, the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine is the first institution of higher learning in Singapore and the genesis of the National University of Singapore.

The School offers one of the finest undergraduate medical programmes in the Asia Pacific region and enjoys international recognition and respect. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2018 by subject and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings by Subject 2017 list NUS Medicine as a leading medical school in Asia.

It admits 300 students to the MBBS degree programme annually and its principal missions are to educate and train the next generation of healthcare professionals, and foster research that will help to advance the practice of medicine.

The 18 NUS Medicine departments in the basic sciences and clinical specialties work closely with the Centre for Medical Education, the Centre for Biomedical Ethics, the Centre for Healthcare Simulation as well as the restructured public hospitals to ensure that teaching and research are aligned and relevant to Singapore's healthcare needs. The School is a founding institutional member of the National University Health System.

For more information about NUS Medicine, please visit <http://nusmedicine.nus.edu.sg>