

# experience SINGAPORE

## ON THE WELLNESS TRACK



focus

How Singaporeans are empowered to take ownership of their health and lifestyle

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TOWARDS BETTER  
LIVING FOR ALL

# ED'S NOTE



Dear readers,

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a timely reminder of the havoc that viruses can wreak. Unfortunately, as devastating as they can be, viruses are not the only causes of death and illness in the world. Every year, millions of people around the world die from chronic diseases arising from a poor diet or lifestyle choices such as smoking or a lack of exercise.

It is no different in Singapore, which has seen some success in reducing the prevalence of smoking and encouraging more people to get screened for cancer. However, the perennial challenge of declining levels of physical activity remains. Putting the country on a path to wellness is the goal of the country's Health Promotion Board (HPB), which was set up more than 20 years ago. HPB is driven by a vision of a nation of healthy people and a more tangible mission of empowering individuals to take ownership of their well-being, in every sense of the word. This spans from nudging people to make healthier choices at hawker centres, to encouraging a nationwide conversation about mental health. Learn more about HPB's approach in this issue's cover story "A Roadmap for Well-Being" (pages 3 to 5).

Much of HPB's strategy is driven by technology, as its Chief Executive Officer shares in our interview with him on pages 6 and 7. The agency also prioritises convenience and accessibility to the people, with its roadmap for well-being centred on people and connecting with them in every setting. Many of HPB's programmes are conducted *in situ*, ensuring that making the switch to a healthier lifestyle is not a hassle. "The Right Choices for Body and Mind" on pages 8 and 9 provides a sense of how this is being implemented in schools, at workplaces and in the community.

Lifestyle diseases are not unique to Singapore and the lessons HPB has gleaned over 20 years can be useful to other countries. Similarly, HPB learns a lot from its foreign counterparts and such meetings are a common feature in the agency's calendar, as revealed by "Towards Better Living for All" (pages 10 and 11).

We trust that this issue will prove an insightful read. Stay well and healthy.

*Cheryl Shum*

**Director  
Strategic Communications Directorate  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore**

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### TOWARDS BETTER LIVING FOR ALL

Sharing knowledge and insights to make the world a healthier place

## experience SINGAPORE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE SINGAPORE COOPERATION PROGRAMME



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
SINGAPORE**

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ISSN: 0219-2896

Experience Singapore is a publication of the Strategic Communications and Technical Cooperation Directorates of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore. The Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) is administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore, and is aimed at sharing Singapore's development experience with other developing countries.

Publishing Consultant Mediarcop Pte Ltd

FREE EXERCISE CLASSES AT SHOPPING MALLS MAKE HEALTHY LIVING MORE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL SINGAPOREANS.



focus

# A ROADMAP FOR WELL-BEING

How the Health Promotion Board empowers Singaporeans to make healthier choices in their daily lives.

**Picture this: a working adult** who is pressed for time is doing his weekly grocery shopping. He needs bread and stands in front of a shelf at the supermarket, looking for the most nutritionally-wholesome option. But rather than needing to spend time poring over nutrition labels, he merely has to look out for a small red pyramid that indicates that a particular product is a “healthier choice”, and he is on his way to the checkout counter.

Singaporeans of all ages and backgrounds are familiar with the red pyramid, known as the Healthier Choice Symbol. It is the brainchild of the country’s Health Promotion Board (HPB), a government agency set up more than 20 years ago to empower and encourage individuals to make healthier choices in everything they do. HPB also has initiatives that help people get more active, normalise mental well-being and attend regular health screenings as well as follow-up tests and check-ups.

## EAT BETTER, LIVE BETTER

In the foodie’s paradise that is Singapore, perhaps food-related schemes are the most relevant of HPB’s efforts. The Healthier Choice Symbol ensures that people eat better in their homes, with more than 4,500 products labelled with its signature red pyramid. These cover everything from staples like bread and noodles to canned tuna and cooking oil. The nutritional guidelines that determine whether a product

makes the cut are updated regularly and can be stringent. For example, in order for a packet of dried pasta to be labelled “higher in wholegrains”, it must contain only wholegrains and no refined grains.

But in a country where people dine out seven times a week on average, having healthier food in homes is not enough. It is also important to extend healthier offerings to the hawker centres and coffeeshops that are dotted across Singapore. Located at every turn, these establishments provide millions of residents with affordable and tasty fare daily. Thanks to HPB’s efforts, patrons can choose from at least one healthier option from many of these outlets. These healthier options are often lower in salt, fat and sugar, and are steamed as opposed to fried. Take chicken rice, one of Singapore’s favourite foods. In versions that are labelled healthier, brown rice is mixed in with white rice, boosting its wholegrain value. The chicken served alongside the rice is also steamed instead of roasted, thereby reducing its fat content.

To experiment with new and healthier ways of preparing foods, F&B operators can tap on HPB’s Healthier Dining Innovation Grant. This offsets the costs of purchasing healthier ingredients and research and development for healthier recipes. Beyond promoting healthy preparation methods, HPB also works closely with the food services industry to provide healthier ingredients, as part of its Healthier Ingredient Development Scheme.

Most recently, the agency embarked on a campaign to cut sodium consumption in the Republic, which is seeing an uptick in hypertension (high blood pressure) cases. According to *The Straits Times* newspaper, a person in Singapore consumes an average of about 3,600mg of sodium daily, a figure well over the World Health Organization’s recommendation of less than 2,000mg. To tackle this, HPB encouraged F&B outlets and hawkers to switch to lower-sodium salt and sauces. It is working with major retailers to introduce lower-sodium salt that can be more affordable for the masses by 2023. Such efforts are part of a national strategy to cut sodium consumption first announced in March 2022.

● F&B OPERATORS IN SINGAPORE ARE SUPPORTED IN THEIR EFFORTS TO SERVE UP HEALTHIER DISHES.



WORKSHOPS WERE CONDUCTED TO EQUIP THE COMMUNITY WITH KNOWLEDGE ON MENTAL WELL-BEING AND PRACTICAL COPING TIPS.



## GETTING THE PUBLIC MOVING

Over the years, HPB has been encouraging Singaporeans to be physically active by expanding the availability and accessibility of physical activity programmes. These programmes cater to different age groups and are conducted – often in community spaces and at different times – to ensure that no one is left behind. Popular spots include neighbourhood parks and even shopping malls. With these, HPB hopes to normalise the concept of people coming together to exercise “anywhere and everywhere”. As part of these efforts, it organises Sundays @ The Park, a weekly activity held across Singapore’s many green spaces. Here, residents can try a range of group exercises, including Zumba and piloxing, for free. Having such accessible activities encourages

members of the public to rope in their friends and families too.

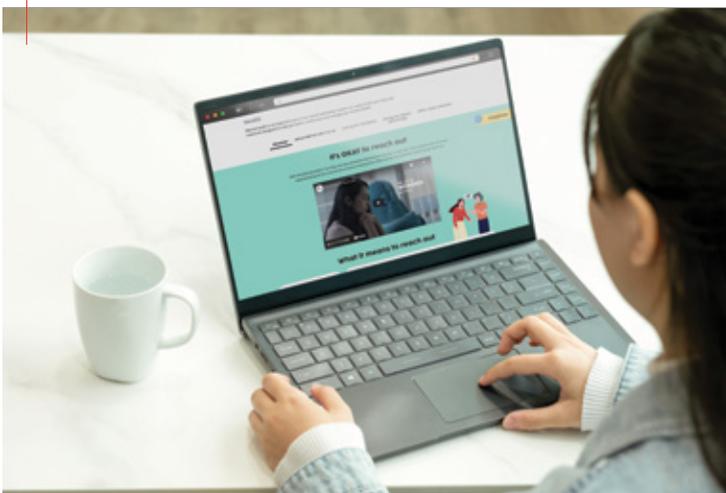
To drive home the message that exercise can be integrated into one’s everyday life, HPB launched the country’s first pedometer-based national physical activity movement, the National Steps Challenge, in 2015. It leverages technology and the concept of gamification to nudge Singaporeans to incorporate physical activity into their lifestyle routines by clocking steps and encourage those who are physically ready to engage in more moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activities. In its first year alone, the programme galvanised more than 156,000 Singaporeans to keep active. Gamification is a major feature in HPB’s approach to a healthier Singapore, as the agency’s Chief Executive reveals to *Experience Singapore* on page 6.

## LET’S TALK MENTAL WELL-BEING

The advent of COVID-19 brought mental health even more into the spotlight as the pandemic affected lives and livelihoods. In 2021, HPB launched its first-ever nationwide mental well-being campaign. Aptly titled “It’s OKAY to Reach Out”, it normalises discussions on mental health and mental well-being. Through its public education campaign, Singaporeans were encouraged to reach out for support when they feel distressed.

As part of the campaign, mental well-being workshops and webinars have also been rolled out in the community, with the aim of teaching individuals more about mental wellness and how to cope with challenging situations. The Board then went a step further to widen access to mental health resources. It developed a one-stop online portal, MindSG, to provide convenient resources and information on mental health and

THE NATIONWIDE MENTAL WELL-BEING CAMPAIGN REACHED THE PUBLIC THROUGH THE INTERNET.



## THE PATH TO HEALTH

- Up until 2000, the task of health promotion lay in the hands of various departments within the Ministry of Health.
- HPB was set up as a separate agency to streamline functions and embark on a more focused health promotion journey.
- It was primed to try new ways of promoting health, such as at the workplace, which provided an institutional setting for health promotion, health education and prevention programmes.





● SINGAPOREANS ARE ENCOURAGED TO GO FOR REGULAR HEALTH SCREENINGS THAT ARE HEAVILY SUBSIDISED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

well-being, based on content curated by experts such as doctors and psychologists.

Explaining the impetus for the campaign, Dr Janil Puthucheary, Singapore's Senior Minister of State for Health, said, "Mental health is an important part of our overall health, just like physical health. With the launch of HPB's mental well-being campaign to encourage Singaporeans to reach out, we want to highlight the importance of support networks. When there is an inclusive and supportive environment,

individuals can feel encouraged to reach out for support when they feel overwhelmed or to offer support to those in need. When we come together, we can play a part in developing a stronger mental health ecosystem in Singapore."

### EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES

Disease detection through regular health screenings and follow-ups is another key area of focus for HPB. Its Screen for Life programme encourages Singaporeans to go for health screenings regularly by subsidising their costs and expanding their availability. Screenings for common diseases like diabetes, high cholesterol and some type of cancers can cost \$5 or less. Between 2017 and 2020, over 100,000 individuals benefitted from these subsidies.

The Screen for Life programme also subsidises follow-up tests and check-ups, which ensures that people do not put off critical medical attention because of cost. These subsidies have had a dramatic effect on the rate of people seeking follow-up care: of those screened for cardiovascular risk in 2017, around 40 per cent had abnormal screening results. Their follow-up rates improved markedly from 56 per cent in 2016 to over 85 per cent in 2020.

● HPB PROMOTES HEALTH FROM AN EARLY AGE, BY PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH IMMUNISATION, HEALTH SCREENING AND DENTAL SERVICES IN SCHOOLS.



## 6 FOR SENIORS

HPB tailors its programmes to cater to different demographics. One such programme is Live Well, Age Well, tailored specially for seniors. Jointly developed with the People's Association, this holistic health and wellness programme spans across physical, mental and social wellness activities. Its six domains are:

**1 Live Active:** To engage and support seniors in meeting their recommended physical activity levels, with a focus on improving their strength, balance and flexibility



**2 Live Enriched:** To equip seniors with knowledge and skills to improve and maintain their physical, mental and functional health



**3 Live Nourished:** To encourage seniors to adopt a healthy and balanced diet, with a focus on meeting the recommended intake of important nutrients including protein and calcium



**4 Live Assured:** To encourage seniors to go for regular health screenings and follow-up appointments

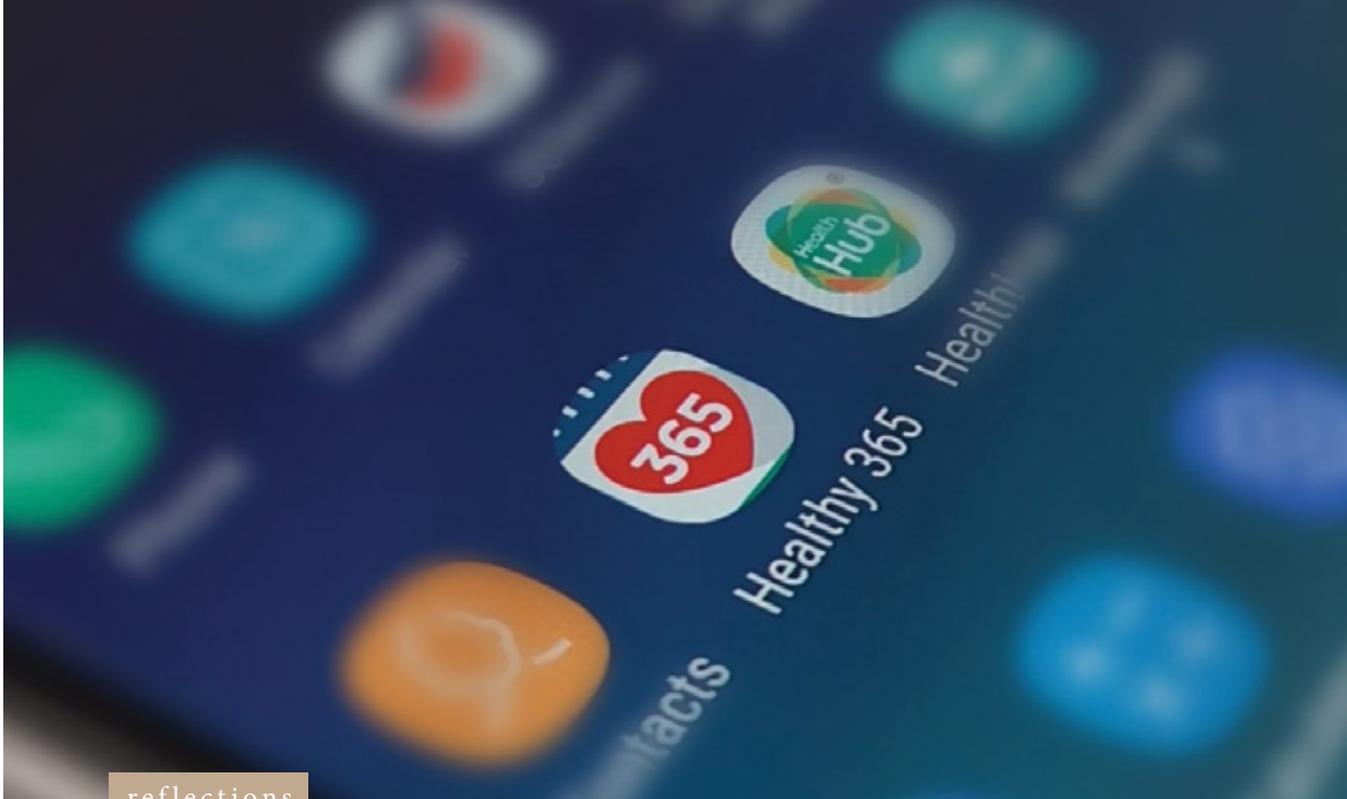


**5 Live Happy:** To educate seniors on the importance of mental and social well-being, and encourage active participation to stay socially connected



**6 Live Prepared:** To equip seniors with essential knowledge and skills to stay independent and fulfilled post-retirement





reflections

# A SHARED JOURNEY

Partnerships, technology and a push for prevention are just some ways in which Singapore is building a healthier tomorrow.

**In October 2022**, Singapore's Parliament unanimously endorsed a plan to reform the country's approach to healthcare. Aptly titled Healthier SG, it was first announced by Health Minister Mr Ong Ye Kung in March 2022 as a bold new vision for healthcare in the Republic. Rooted in the adage "prevention is better than cure", it aims to keep people healthy for as long as possible through preventive care and early intervention while continuing to provide the necessary support to those who need it. "We need to maintain health, rather than treat sickness," summed up Mr Ong.

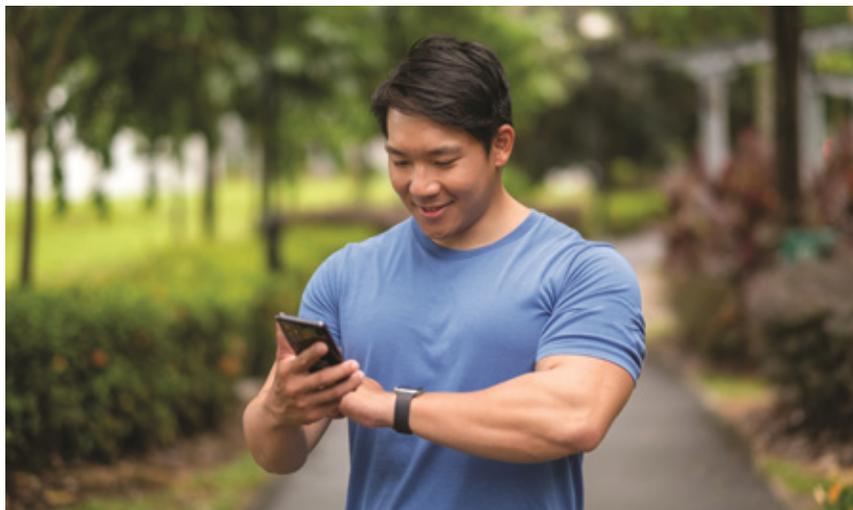
## POWERED UP

Some of the key tools that will help Singapore in its quest for better health outcomes are already widely used, explains Mr Tay Choon Hong, Chief Executive Officer of the country's Health Promotion Board (HPB), a statutory body under the Ministry of Health. "Today, about one-fifth of our adult population regularly uses the Healthy 365 app," he says, describing an app that has over the years, used gamification to make healthy living a highly engaging and rewarding activity. The app allows Singaporeans to participate

in HPB's flagship programmes like the *Eat, Drink, Shop Healthy Challenge* and the *National Steps Challenge*, which reward participants for making healthier choices and staying active. But Mr Tay believes that usage of the app can go even further under the Healthier SG programme. "The app will be the front window for residents to gain digital access to all available community programmes that support their healthier lifestyles," he tells *Experience Singapore*.

To support this mission, the app will be enhanced to better track physical activities and diets, and also support access to community activities. "It will also be made

interoperable with other digital health apps, which can encourage and nudge residents to adopt healthier lifestyles," shares Mr Tay, who has helmed HPB since July 2022. These lifestyle changes will be tracked by the Healthy 365 app and HPB will encourage residents to share this data with their doctors. This aligns with one of the key planks of the Healthier SG effort: a national primary care enrolment programme that will kick in from 2023. Under this programme, each resident will be invited to enrol with a family physician of their choice to be their first line of care. Having a sense of their lifestyle trends will help these physicians better care for their patients.



PHOTOS: HEALTH PROMOTION BOARD, SHUTTERSTOCK

But Mr Tay stresses that amid these developments, data integrity and security will remain paramount. "HPB collects and uses only the data we need with clear objectives and intent," he stresses. "When participants sign on to HPB programmes, there will be a clear process for them to provide explicit and informed consent to share the health data they provide during these programmes." He adds that there are strict policies, processes and safeguards to ensure the proper use and protection of all consented sharing of personal data within the public sector, and that HPB adheres to the Government's data protection framework. Robust monitoring and oversight — including regular audits — also ensure proper personal data management.

## STRONGER TOGETHER

As HPB expands the use of its app, it also prioritises inclusivity. "We recognise the need to support population segments that are less familiar with digital platforms," says Mr Tay. For example, HPB has worked with community and public sector partners to raise seniors' digital literacy, bring them on board the Healthy 365 mobile app and guide them on the use of virtual platforms so that they can participate in its programmes.

Partnerships do more than just improve accessibility to health programmes; they can also encourage greater and more active participation. And as Mr Tay reveals, these partnerships need not be within the public or people sectors. Collaborations with the private sector can also be fruitful. Just take HPB's collaborative effort with Apple,

the LumiHealth programme. Launched in October 2020, it equips Apple Watch users with health information, and recommends actions and weekly activity goals that are personalised to the individual. Boasting more than 300,000 downloads since its launch, the app has moved the needle on the country's activity levels. For example, active participants have completed 32.9 million workouts since the programme started. This translates to an average of over 20 workouts per participant per month, which is double the frequency as compared to before their joining LumiHealth.

## A SOLID FOUNDATION

But even as Singapore makes progress towards a healthier population, new challenges can and do emerge. A year into the COVID-19 pandemic, HPB surveyed the health and well-being of the population, and found that almost half of respondents felt that mental wellness was not as important as physical health. The findings spurred it to act. "We stepped up our efforts to normalise the topic of mental well-being and bring it to the fore so that it is recognised as an important part of holistic health," says Mr Tay.

When such challenges crop up, HPB looks to its network of partners to help tackle them. For example, equipping Singaporeans with information and skills to strengthen their mental well-being was a community effort that involved a pool of peer supporters. "We also offer structured programmes in schools and at workplaces for youths and working adults to learn how



## THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

Thanks to its robust network of partners, HPB has...

- Ensured that all **93** constituencies across Singapore have been developed into **Healthy Community Ecosystems**, where residents have greater access to healthy lifestyle programmes, which include exercise classes and health screenings, as well as healthier options, such as healthier meal items at eateries within them.
- Transformed **78** industrial estates, business parks and commercial precincts into **Healthy Workplace Ecosystems**, providing shared amenities and services for workers to use for activities such as fitness classes and wellness programmes.
- Children in all mainstream schools have access to nationally-recommended **vaccinations, health checks and dental care**, as well as **healthier meals** in schools.



[Working with public and private sector partners] enables us to engage Singaporeans in places where they live, play and work.

**Mr Tay Choon Hong,**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Health Promotion Board



to support others and also identify common signs of mental health conditions," he shares.

Reflecting on this approach, Mr Tay says, that the idea is to build pervasiveness and accessibility so that there are few barriers to individuals being able to adopt a healthy lifestyle. As part of this approach, HPB works with public and private sector partners to leverage their expertise and networks, to enhance its offerings of health promotion programmes and extend its reach. "This enables us to engage Singaporeans in places where they live, play and work," he explains. And judging by the success of its programmes, it has done just that.



in singapore

Renie Shazleena Binte Rosmadi  
STUDENT HEALTH ADVISOR



## A GROWING PROBLEM

Initiatives like those spearheaded by HPB go some way towards tackling emerging health issues.

One such issue in Singapore is obesity: the rate of obesity in the general population rose from **8.6 per cent** in 2017 to **10.5 per cent** just three years later.

SOURCE: MINISTRY OF HEALTH

# THE RIGHT CHOICES FOR BODY AND MIND

Three individuals show how an attitude towards healthy living is all-pervasive in Singapore.

### IN SCHOOLS: STARTING YOUNG

Ms Renie Shazleena Binte Rosmadi has handy advice for anyone trying to prod the younger generation towards a healthier lifestyle. "Don't nag too much," she quips. "Make it a point to build rapport with them and listen to their concerns and views openly, and without judgment." She also believes that words of encouragement, regardless of one's progress, can go a long way.

These are some lessons the 27-year-old has picked up on the job as a Student Health Advisor with the Health Promotion Board (HPB). In this role, she is assigned to two secondary schools in Singapore, where she counsels students aged between 13 and 17 on issues like weight management, insufficient sleep and even smoking.

Her two years in the job have opened her eyes to health trends among the young. For one, they do not always make the best dietary choices. Many of the students referred to her prefer snacks like nuggets to rice, meat and vegetables. "This is concerning because

snacks have very little nutritional value," she observes. Based on these trends, Ms Renie works closely with canteens in schools to introduce healthier options in their menus. She also finds that some students are easily misled by misinformation on the Internet. Just take brown sugar for example; to her dismay, many students believe that it is more nutritious than white sugar, in the same way that brown rice is better for you than white rice. "They don't realise that it's just white sugar mixed with molasses," she explains.

Debunking myths like this is a regular aspect of work for Ms Renie, who sees around 10 students every day. These youths are often referred to her by teachers or even parents. Students may also make an appointment to see her if they have questions about their health and wellness. Ms Renie is very grateful to be a role model to these students, having lacked one herself. "I never had a student health ambassador growing up and up to my early adult years, I had a warped view of health," she shares. "I thought it was all about

being skinny and I would try fad diets and crazy exercise routines to be that thin. I hope that with my guidance, I can steer students away from such practices."

### AT THE WORKPLACE: DISCOVERING HER NEW SELF

When Ms Regine Guo, 41, saw her Body Mass Index (BMI) creeping towards an unhealthy range five years ago, she decided to take action by exercising more. Such lifestyle changes can be difficult to sustain as a working adult, given the stresses and rigour of daily life. "We've all

Rahimah Bte Maarof  
HPB HEALTH AMBASSADOR



felt it before — the struggle to find time to exercise, the temptation of unhealthy foods and the tendency to eat out more,” says Ms Guo, who works in the sales and marketing industry.

Fortunately, Ms Guo was determined to get ahead of the issues that confronted her and found a suitable avenue to help her stay on track: HPB’s Healthy Workplace Ecosystem. This brings together health programmes and initiatives to the doorsteps of workers, literally. “There are free workouts dotted around the island and the timings are suitable for working adults,” shares Ms Guo, who leans towards classes like Zumba and high-intensity interval training.

These have had a dramatic effect on her wellness. Shedding more than 10kg has lowered her BMI significantly and she has also seen tangible benefits, such as improved stamina and strength. The key to these dramatic changes has been consistency: the convenience of having a free workout near the office has helped Ms Guo double her activity levels. Before joining the programme, she would at most exercise thrice weekly. This has since increased to almost six times a week.



Regine Guo  
HEALTHY WORKPLACE  
ECOSYSTEM  
PARTICIPANT

The benefits of the Healthy Workplace Ecosystem also extend to other facets of Ms Guo’s life. Through its workshops on healthier diets, she has steered away from unhealthy snacks like potato chips and biscuits, and now opts for a handful of nuts instead. “I’m definitely more cautious of my food intake,” she reveals. “Less fried food, more wholegrains... I’ve learnt to incorporate these simple changes whenever I’m eating.”

### IN THE COMMUNITY: CHEERING OTHERS ON

Healthy living is a deeply personal matter, but that doesn’t mean that members of the community cannot come together to better one another’s health. That is the approach taken by Mdm Rahimah Bte Maarof, a sprightly 63-year-old who has been volunteering as a Health Ambassador with HPB for a decade. Why take on this extra role above her full-time job as a customer support office? “I am passionate about leading a healthier life while helping others to do the same,” she tells *Experience Singapore*.

As one of the 450 or so Health Ambassadors in Singapore, Mdm Rahimah volunteers at events and roadshows organised by HPB to share with fellow residents how they, too, can lead healthier lives. These tips may at times be customised to tackle an emerging health issue. For example, as part of HPB’s “Let’s Beat Diabetes” campaign roadshows, Mdm Rahimah shared with residents on healthy eating by adopting the ‘My Healthy Plate’ guide and tips on how they can keep active.

And it is not just the community that benefits from Mdm Rahimah’s efforts. She believes that she, too, is reaping the benefits of spreading the word about health. “Before becoming a Health Ambassador, I would feel lethargic easily, even after doing just a little work. I was also pessimistic in my mindset,” she reveals. “But after incorporating the lifestyle changes that I share as a Health Ambassador, I feel healthier and more energetic. I even have a more positive outlook on life!”

PHOTOS: KELVIN CHIA



joining hands

# TOWARDS BETTER LIVING FOR ALL

Sharing knowledge and insights to make the world a healthier place.



**The COVID-19 pandemic** has been a timely reminder of how public health benefits from a multilateral and cooperative approach. Although it primarily focuses on the health of the local population, Singapore's Health Promotion Board (HPB) also engages its global counterparts by sharing knowledge and best practices. Such exchanges proved particularly valuable during the pandemic, as each country looked to learn best practices from one another.

To facilitate such exchanges, HPB hosted the International Network of Health Promotion Foundations Annual Meeting 2021 virtually, which was attended by representatives from ThaiHealth (Thailand), VicHealth (Australia), Health Promotion Administration Taiwan (Taiwan), Korea Health (South Korea) and TongaHealth (Tonga). At the meeting, delegates shared about the impact of COVID-19, as well as strategies to sustain health promotion efforts and digital healthcare in their communities. It strengthened relations among international health promotion foundations and served as a platform where HPB contributed its learnings and insights on resuming health promotion efforts as Singapore moved towards a new normal of living with the coronavirus.

## CHAMPIONING COLLABORATION

HPB has been a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre (WHOCC) for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention since 2007. WHOCCs are institutions such as research institutes, universities or academies, which are designated by the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Director-General to carry out activities in support of the Organization's programmes.

There are currently more than 800 WHOCCs in over 80 Member States working with WHO on areas such as nursing, occupational health, communicable diseases, nutrition, mental health, chronic diseases and health technologies. Commenting on the importance of collaborating centres, WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom

Ghebreyesus said, "Without you, WHO would simply not be able to do the work we do."

This is HPB's fourth successive term as a WHOCC, through which the agency provides capability-building and technical assistance to governments, as well as developing resources and tools to further health promotion efforts in the Western Pacific region and beyond. One way of sharing such resources and know-how is through global health meetings, conferences and workshops. Such exchanges continued during the pandemic. At two Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation workshops held in 2021, HPB presented Singapore's cancer control policy and on urbanisation, population ageing and technology innovation. The engagement allowed Singapore to learn from international best practices.



## A HISTORY OF COLLABORATION

### DID YOU KNOW?

Collaborating centres have a long history.

The idea of using national institutions for international purposes was mooted during the League of Nations, a worldwide intergovernmental organisation that aimed to safeguard peace after the First World War. At that time, laboratories were first designated as reference centres for the standardisation of biological products around the world. Over the decades, the number of collaborating centres has grown, along with the scale of their commitments to various WHO programmes.



across the ecosystem to create convenient access to physical activity in the population's living environments.

## LEARNING FROM ONE ANOTHER

HPB also actively engages its global counterparts to share successes and lessons in managing a common scourge among developed countries: unhealthy diets. At an inter-regional meeting jointly organised by WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, HPB shared ways to promote healthy eating habits.

As a temporary advisor to WHO at the meeting, the agency gleaned insights from its experience and strategies in implementing the Healthier Dining Programme in mass dining settings, as well as participated in a discussion on key actions and the way forward for the region. These contributed to the drafting of a regional toolkit to promote healthy diets through the informal food sector, which covers small eateries and F&B outlets. These cross-

country learnings also take place on a bilateral level. A visit by a team of Australian delegates from the Victoria Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Victoria Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) facilitated the cross-sharing of ideas and discussions covering strategies and approaches for health promotion, disease prevention and population health surveillance.

HPB, too, has visited other countries to pick up best practices. In 2019, it entered an agreement with the Thailand Health Promotion Foundation to collaborate on activities that support mutual advancement in health promotion. This agreement led to valuable exchanges between the two nations. HPB staff visited Bangkok to study Thailand's best practices in social mobilisation and social marketing, while the Thai Deputy Minister of Public Health, Dr Sathit Pitutecha, visited Singapore to gain insights on the implementation of large-scale programmes and preventive services for the young.

These exchanges are also a valuable way to explore how common goals can be achieved. One 2019 meeting aimed to accelerate efforts to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals on mental health and non-communicable diseases. That discussion aimed to address the target to reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one-third by 2030 through prevention and treatment, and to promote mental health and well-being. HPB shared insights from Singapore's progress in multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships in health promotion efforts. It also encouraged other delegates to leverage public-private-people partnerships for sustainable health promotion and disease prevention.

In December 2021, HPB was invited to speak at the World Health Organization 10<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Health Promotion: Well-being, Equity and Sustainable Development. During the forum discussion on active living for health and well-being, HPB shared its learnings and experiences in the promotion of physical activity over the years. The sharing centred on how the scale and effectiveness of programme interventions were measured by leveraging digital technology and behavioural data, as well as the adoption of a systems-based approach together with stakeholders



## DIGITAL HEALTH

### FOSS for Good Technical Assistance Package

18 – 22 JULY 2022

In 1992, Singapore established the Forum of Small States (FOSS) – an informal and non-ideological grouping of small states at the UN. It comprises 108 countries across all geographical regions and levels of development. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed unparalleled demands on the healthcare sector. In response, the healthcare industry demonstrated its resilience and capability in innovatively adapting the way through which healthcare is delivered. This course aimed to share Singapore's healthcare institutions' experience in adapting to the new normal through the lenses of public policymaking. It allowed participants to better appreciate why technology is needed in healthcare and how advances in technology could potentially improve the delivery of healthcare at both the individual and population level.

A NEWSLETTER OF THE  
SINGAPORE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

**BOOSTING  
TECH**

Singapore will disburse up to \$1 million in grants as part of a push to adopt health tech.



joining hands

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a timely reminder of how public health benefits from a multilateral and cooperative approach. On this front, Singapore participates actively in meetings and dialogues that facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge.