Nurturing healthy ageing: A community-based multidisciplinary model for elderly wellbeing in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The Holistic Well-being Program for Older Adults: Empowered Seniors, Prosperous Nation is a multidisciplinary community health initiative supported by the Ministry of Finance Malaysia. It was developed to address the growing healthcare needs of the ageing Malaysian population, which is expected to reach 2.4 million individuals aged 65 and above by 2030. Implemented in Negeri Sembilan, the project integrates key components of physical, mental, oral, and spiritual health through community-based interventions. **Materials and Methods:** The program comprises four pillars: Afiyah Ageing (physical health literacy and screening), Oral Wellness and the innovative Denture Express service (dental care), Quran Buddies (spiritual enrichment and companionship), and targeted mental health activities. A highlight of the initiative was the Karnival Sihat Madani, a one-day health carnival hosted at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), featuring healthcare screenings, expert consultations, and exhibitions. Industry partners provided support across sectors such as mobility, nutrition, education, and digital services. Physical screening was conducted using time up and go test among the participants. **Results:** The project reached 600 older adults, with significant impact: 41 individuals received free dentures, 58 participated in the 3-day Quran Buddies workshop, 71 received dental screening and minor treatment, and 60 were screened for physical function. The carnival welcomed 230 attendees including caregivers and families. A total of 41 patients received dentures from the dental team and 60 people received a three day course in improving spiritual health. The physical screening revealed that 45.3% of older adults have time up and go test less than 10 seconds, while 52.8% have a result between 10-20 seconds. Time up and go test times highly correlate with frailty. People with times more than 12 seconds predict future frailty. It is concerning that half of the older adults are predicted to be frail in future. This requires widespread intervention and awareness to improve physical fitness of older adults in the community. The older adults provided positive feedback throughout the programme and have requested for more activities to be conducted in the future. **Conclusion:** This initiative is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3), promoting good health and wellbeing among older adults. It combined multidisciplinary expert to provide a holistic intervention programme for older adults in the community. The approach to ageing must be holistic with multidisciplinary involvement as a health of an individual is not isolated to just the physical but include, mental, social, emotional, spiritual and financial. Universities have a role in engaging with the communities to improve well-being of the population. This programme demonstrates the effectiveness of a faith-integrated, university-led model to support healthy ageing, reduce dependency, and foster social resilience in Malaysia.foster social resilience in Malaysia.

Keywords: Ageing, older adults, community-based, wellbeing, community engagement