



## PRESS RELEASE

23 August 2023 | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Bolstering education and research efforts in an ageing society: Public Health Service 2023**

***The Public Health Service 2023, a student-led initiative by the NUS Medical Society, marks 20 years of service to public housing residents.***

*Singapore, 23 August 2023*—This year’s Public Health Service, to be held on 26 and 27 August 2023, at the Canopy @ J-Link, will reach out to residents of Yuhua constituency and focus on the early prevention and education of diseases, particularly bone-health and cardiometabolic illnesses.

An annual preventive health project organised by the NUS Medical Society, the student body of the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (NUS Medicine), the PHS motto, “Promoting Health, Spreading Awareness”, continues to be the mission of the comprehensive health screening event that began 20 years ago.

Involving volunteers from Singapore’s three public healthcare clusters: the National University Health System, the National Healthcare Group and SingHealth, the comprehensive health screening event will see 1000 Yuhua residents attended by more than 600 volunteers during the two days of the event. These include medical, nursing and dental students, doctors as well as allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists and audiologists, supported by PHS alumni. They have a busy weekend screening residents and identifying those who need follow-up at polyclinics and hospitals: with one in four Singaporeans aged 65 years or older in 2030, and the incidence of osteoporotic fractures projected to increase from more than 15,200 in 2017, to more than 24,000 in 2035, the prevalence of bone-related diseases warrants greater attention, along with cardiometabolic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and stroke.

This year’s PHS not only focuses on primary and secondary prevention strategies that reinforce positive health behaviour in the public, but also integrates the roles of Youth Health Ambassadors — students across various junior colleges, polytechnics and international schools, into the health education aim of PHS. Both the students and residents will be empowered to take charge of their

own health, through a series of games and exhibitions that allow both groups to interact and learn more about preventive healthcare.

“I am pleased to see how generations of NUS Medicine students have kept faith with the objectives of Public Health Service and over the years, grown this community health screening programme to incorporate various modalities and initiatives. Along the way, our students have invited and partnered allies from the healthcare clusters, agencies, institutions as well as alumni and students from other faculties to make PHS a truly meaningful effort,” said Professor Chong Yap Seng, Dean of NUS Medicine.

PHS 2023 will be officially opened by the Guest-of-Honour Ms Grace Fu, Minister for Sustainability and the Environment and Member of Parliament for Yuhua.

### **Importance of bone health and cardiometabolic diseases in an increasingly ageing population**

Complementing the Healthier SG initiative which centres on preventive health, the complimentary health screening at PHS encourages residents to take the initiative in health-seeking behaviours.

The health screening will include risk assessment and screening for various chronic diseases, such as metabolic syndrome, common geriatrics conditions, and education on bone-health. PHS 2023 would also educate residents on the importance of disease prevention, through 12 updated modalities, such as Phlebotomy for Diabetes Mellitus and Dyslipidemia, Women’s Cancer education, Oral health, Consultations with Dieticians as well as partnerships with various organisations.

“Cardiometabolic diseases are one of the leading causes of death and disability in Singapore. This is especially so in recent years, due to our ageing population and changing lifestyle and dietary habits. Another increasingly prevalent and potentially serious condition is osteoporosis. Despite rising rates of osteoporosis, there is still a lack of awareness on bone health among the population. Therefore, it is important to address the increasing prevalence of such diseases through education, screening and follow-up management,” said Ms Elvia Ng, Co-Project Director of PHS 2023 and third-year student at NUS Medicine.

“We hope that through PHS’ screening and educational initiatives, we can not only pick up some of these conditions (e.g. hypertension, hyperlipidemia, diabetes mellitus) early, but also help the public identify any lifestyle risk factors and provide advice and counselling to motivate them to change their lifestyle habits,” added Ms Chong Shu Ting, Co-Project Director of PHS 2023 and third-year student at NUS Medicine.

The PHS committee has also homed in on mental health this year, specifically on expanding the referral criteria to include residents exhibiting symptoms of poorer mental health and caregiver

stress, other than depression. They will give more help to residents flagged for, or at risk of depression and other mental health problems.

Streamlining its focus on a holistic programme of prevention and education, the PHS team would be setting up a comprehensive exhibition beside their health screening, with close to 20 partner organisations, including the National University Health System Regional Health System, Singapore National Stroke Association (SNSA), Singapore Nutrition and Dietetics Association (SNDA), Singapore Anglican Community Services (SACS), Cardiovascular Disease Translational Research Programme at NUS Medicine, and more.

### **Young Health Ambassadors' Programme in fronting preventive healthcare**

The Young Health Ambassadors Programme of PHS empowers youth with health knowledge, to promote the importance of preventive care medicine amongst communities.

Earlier in the year, these ambassadors learned about various health topics ranging from physical wellness to mental wellbeing, and transposed their learning into posters, which would be displayed at the health screening.

Marrying the education arm of PHS with screening efforts, the youth health ambassadors organised a Health and Fitness Carnival, which will be held at one of the booths. The carnival will entail interactive games and questions focused on the main topics of metabolic diseases, cancers, mental health, and overall wellbeing, serving to improve health literacy among the public.

Through this very first experience of translating their knowledge into on-the-ground interaction with the public, this initiative in PHS 2023 will bolster the students' confidence in interacting with patients in the future, as well as give them a better understanding of the role health professionals play in the community.

### **Translating research into actionable measures for preventive healthcare**

As a project targeted to promote health through a population-based approach, and to improve the health literacy of the Singapore community, PHS helps to effect change in the community. This entails the need to better understand the population and to effect change bigger than PHS itself.

This year, the PHS committee will kickstart a development committee that focuses mainly on analysing the data collected from the health screenings over the past years. The data includes demographics of screening participants, utilisation of modalities, key areas of interest and the health needs of the population. From the information obtained, they will delve into a particular research topic to support the main screening event, in order to better understand the health seeking behaviours of residents, and the factors affecting how they go about health screening.

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Taking a holistic approach to health, understanding not only the physical, but also mental and emotional health of the population, PHS 2023 will be focusing on the correlation between individuals with chronic diseases in Singapore and their overall wellbeing. This research and information can also improve early detection of chronic conditions and guide any future efforts towards healthcare interventions.

As a whole, PHS hopes to contribute to public health education and awareness in Singapore, potentially accentuating efforts in shaping public health policies and clinical practice guidelines in the future, while continuing to empower the local community to take care of their own health.

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### **About National University of Singapore (NUS)**

The National University of Singapore (NUS) is Singapore's flagship university, which offers a global approach to education, research and entrepreneurship, with a focus on Asian perspectives and expertise. We have 16 colleges, faculties and schools across three campuses in Singapore, with more than 40,000 students from 100 countries enriching our vibrant and diverse campus community. We have also established our NUS Overseas Colleges programme in more than 15 cities around the world.

Our multidisciplinary and real-world approach to education, research and entrepreneurship enables us to work closely with industry, governments and academia to address crucial and complex issues relevant to Asia and the world. Researchers in our faculties, research centres of excellence, corporate labs and more than 30 university-level research institutes focus on themes that include energy; environmental and urban sustainability; treatment and prevention of diseases; active ageing; advanced materials; risk management and resilience of financial systems; Asian studies; and Smart Nation capabilities such as artificial intelligence, data science, operations research and cybersecurity.

For more information on NUS, please visit [nus.edu.sg](https://nus.edu.sg).

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

The NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine is Singapore's first and largest medical school. Our enduring mission centres on nurturing highly competent, values-driven and inspired healthcare professionals to transform the practice of medicine and improve health around the world.

Through a dynamic and future-oriented five-year curriculum that is inter-disciplinary and inter-professional in nature, our students undergo a holistic learning experience that exposes them to

multiple facets of healthcare and prepares them to become visionary leaders and compassionate doctors and nurses of tomorrow. Since the School's founding in 1905, more than 12,000 graduates have passed through our doors.

In our pursuit of health for all, our strategic research programmes focus on innovative, cutting-edge biomedical research with collaborators around the world to deliver high impact solutions to benefit human lives.

The School is the oldest institution of higher learning in the National University of Singapore and a founding institutional member of the National University Health System. It is one of the leading medical schools in Asia and ranks among the best in the world (Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023 by subject and the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings by subject 2023).

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