

Session 4: Disabilities, Innovation and Design

Summary by Hoa Nguyen, Research Assistant, LKYCIC

Speakers in the fourth session spoke on the broad theme of ageing, technology, innovation and design, and each speaker added a unique perspective to the table for discussion. Their presentations were framed by the question: how design and innovation can enhance quality of life of older people living with disabilities?

Dr. Yuan Lu presented a range of examples of innovative designs that encourage active ageing for older people in the Netherlands. She spoke specifically about the use of technology for older adults, and proposed that there is growing room to help older adults cope with existing technology, instead of creating new technologies for older adults. She thus provided many successful examples of this approach to technology, such as the LivingLab that allows older adults to live with nursing students with the intention of intergenerational exchanges of technological knowledge and skills. Other programs proposed such as YouGoGo allows older adults to better map out their routes during longer walks, consequently encouraging more independence.

Ms. DY Suharya focused her talk specifically on dementia and what Jakarta is doing to build a more dementia-friendly city, alongside the private sector. To achieve the goal of becoming the first dementia-friendly metropole in the world, the Jakarta municipal government and Alzheimers Indonesia have been implementing initiatives to raise awareness about dementia and non-communicable diseases. The initiatives include providing information in public spaces about detecting early stages of dementia. Much of the campaigning has been targeted at families and young students in hopes of bringing this knowledge back into their homes. Hence, this work has resulted in a marked increase in the early diagnosis of dementia in three different regions of Indonesia.

Lastly, Dr. Wong Chek Hooi spoke extensively about the various elements of the physical environment in Singapore and categorized them based on the level of friendliness to older adults. He also calls for a more empathetic approach when it comes to infrastructural design for older adults. For example: drain covers and zebra crossings can be very intimidating for older adults as cognitive ability worsens. Thus, the nuances in preferences and needs of older adults must be given more emphasis in design processes.