

Session 5: Arts and Leisure

Summary by Teo Shien-Min, Research Assistant, LKYCIC

Speakers in the fifth session spoke on the broad theme of the inclusion of cultural activities, horticulture and gardening, and visual art in the ageing process. Their presentations were framed by the question: how arts and leisure can create later life opportunities to preserve and enhance health and well-being in old age?

Dr. Christer Gustafsson presented on his study of the impact of culture on healthcare and well-being. Rationale for the study was based in part on the needed economic drive for healthcare funding. In order to study the relationship between cultural participation and overall health, Dr. Gustafsson's conducted a pilot project that lasted for 10 weeks called *Culture on Prescription* in Sweden. This pilot project found positive results with regards cooperation between different institutions on a regional level. Also, Dr. Gustafsson and his team delved deeper into the impacts that a culture can have on the economy. They looked at active participation in culture and how individuals are trained to accustom themselves to varied changes in lifestyles. The presentation concluded by indicating that cultural activities have the potential to break isolation, enhance social values, positively impact living spaces for older adults as well as their health, and lastly increase an individual's sense of confidence.

Ms. Angelia Sia introduced the concept of therapeutic horticulture and gardens for older adults in Singapore. The concept plan consists of investigating and locating places to provide these gardens for older adults, whilst at the same time preserving the natural environment. The provision of parks and open green spaces hopes to improve both mental and physical health for older adults. The study conducted by National Parks Board (NParks) involved 69 older adults, aged 63 to 65 who participated in a therapeutic horticultural programme that included gardening, nature walks, and several small projects. NParks found an improvement of psychological well-being, hence contributing to the lessening in depression. Hence, an expansion in the number of therapeutic gardens in Singapore is planned, with 11 gardens expected to be developed by 2020. These therapeutic gardens are also designed to cater to the functional needs of older adults, such as having raised planters to ease their movements around gardening.

Dr. Belinda Yuen presented the state of research on visual art and ageing in Singapore, an area that has received relatively little research attention. Dr. Yuen's research, which is currently ongoing and conducted in collaboration with National Gallery Singapore, aims to look at key mechanisms, potential barriers, best practices and opportunities for the promotion of visual art participation among older adults in Singapore. Emerging preliminary findings suggest that older adults find visual art to evoke positivity in their outlooks of daily life. Many of the older participants reported that it was their first time visiting the Gallery. She also presented some of the motivators and barriers to visual art participation among older respondents.