

Making a Difference

Our staff and philanthropic initiatives enable people to rise above challenges, so that our communities can have brighter and more resilient futures.

Strengthening the Mental Health of Seniors

Ms Lim Li Cheng, 70, a retired bank receptionist, suffers from schizophrenia and spends most of her time alone in her one-room rental flat in Clementi. At times, she finds herself consumed by negative thoughts and mood swings. These feelings intensified during Singapore's COVID-19 circuit breaker period in 2020.

However, she has grown calmer and more relaxed in recent months due to the fortnightly mental health screening sessions, which tap on Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology, and follow-up counselling sessions organised by social service agency Lions Befrienders (LB).

“Social stigma and fear of losing face are preventing many seniors from sharing or seeking help for their mental health problems. Some are socially isolated, especially during the pandemic, which can feed into negative tendencies and aggravate their mental condition. The evidence-based F.A.C.E. programme can help detect mental health issues accurately, and allow early intervention to keep our seniors healthy and resilient.”

– Lim Hock Chuan, Head, Programmes, Temasek Foundation



LB's social worker Qayyum Norshapiee conducting a mental health screening for Li Cheng.



The AI software analysing Li Cheng's emotions in real time.

“The screenings have helped me to become more aware of my feelings. My counsellor also reminds me to relax and focus on things that are important. I feel calmer now.”

– Lim Li Cheng, participant of F.A.C.E. programme

Harnessing Technology

Li Cheng is among over 4,000 seniors who will be screened by the end of 2023 for mental health issues as part of LB's *Facial Analysis Correlation of Emotions* (F.A.C.E.) programme. The programme, which was rolled out in July 2021, is supported by a S\$190,000 grant from Temasek Foundation that covers costs such as the purchase of laptops and software licence fees.

The software uses proprietary computer vision algorithms and machine learning techniques to analyse facial expressions, and provides information on the emotions of the seniors such as contentment, sadness and fear. Based on the reports, counsellors recommend appropriate follow-up actions, such as referring serious cases to hospitals or counselling sessions for milder cases.

Since the start of the pandemic two years ago, LB has observed that more seniors are showing signs of mental health issues. However, it does not employ enough experienced counsellors to conduct the screenings.

LB found its solution in the AI software. The software can be operated by people without experience in counselling. In fact, it takes only about two weeks to train someone to operate the software and conduct the 15-minute question and answer session.

Seniors said the screenings are useful and would recommend it to others who want to understand their emotions better.

Learn more about the F.A.C.E. programme at temasekreview.com.sg/FACE or scan the QR code

