

ASIAONE NEWS SINGAPORE

Singapore 'needs to change filial-piety mindset'



Associate Professor Phua Kai Hong, LKY School of Public Policy, and Dr Seet.

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my paper

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Singapore would be in a better position to care for the aged today, if its elderly-welfare schemes had been implemented decades ago, according to academics.

National University of Singapore (NUS) Associate Professor Phua Kai Hong said: "(Back then), there was no point anticipating the problem until you reached it (and) when you crossed the bridge.

"Now, the bridge is behind us, and we're still trying desperately to find all those intermediate and long-term care facilities."

The health economist's comments were made during a roundtable discussion called "Ageing in Place - How Prepared is Singapore?" held at NUS yesterday. It was organised by NUS' Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and was attended by 130 people, including researchers, policymakers and eldercare practitioners.

HCA Hospice Care president Seet Ai Mee said that the elderly are often forgotten in fund-raising efforts.

She said: "In Singapore, it's very easy to raise funds for children and for animals. Right at the bottom are dying people."

As one in five Singaporeans will be an elderly citizen by 2030, Minister of State for Health and Manpower Amy Khor - who was present - said that "how prepared we are to support such a population will surely define... the Singapore we see by then".

NUS Associate Professor Paulin Straughan, a sociologist, said that the Government is pushing eldercare to the family unit today, whether subtly or expressly.

"On the one hand, we're encouraging young people to get married (and) promising them the privacy of modern marriages," she said.

"On the other hand, when it comes to eldercare, we want them to take care of their parents."

Prof Straughan added that in today's modernised society, few wives become housewives and take care of the elderly. This is why it is important to change people's mindsets about filial piety, she said.

Prof Phua said: "It's a lot of work to be done in a sunrise industry for the sunset population."

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