

## WHAT IS DEMENTIA

Dementia is a condition that causes progressive intellectual decline, leading to increasing difficulties in coping with everyday activities.

It is not part of normal ageing and mainly affects seniors (those above 60 years old). It can also affect the young.

As of 2015, there are 45,000

persons with dementia in Singapore.

One in every 10 persons aged 60 years and above has dementia.

### Common problems faced by people with dementia:

- Problems with recent memory, visual perception, walking and

mobility

- Changes in their mood, behaviour and personality.
- Confusion with places and time
- Difficulties in planning, thinking and communication
- Poor judgment and impaired social behaviour, such as taking off clothes in public

Poly students join movement to improve awareness and understanding of dementia

# Be a friend to fight dementia



**DEMENTIA FRIENDS:** Nattasha Nina Alvinur (in white) signed up to spread awareness of the disease.  
TNP PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

## HOW TO HELP PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

### Remember the K.I.N.D gesture

**Keep a lookout:** Look out for behaviour such as speaking incoherently, accusing others of stealing their things, shouting and hitting out, looking lost and confused, repetitive actions that appear purposeless and removing clothes.

### Interact with C.A.R.E:

Be clear, simple and patient, acknowledge their concerns, be respectful and reassuring and engage to provide comfort and build trust.

### Notice the needs of people with dementia and offer help:

Consider their feelings and respond as appropriate, use pictures and drawings to find out their needs. Look for the next-of-kin's contact details.

**Dial for help:** If you are unable to provide help, call the next-of-kin if you have their number, or call the police.

**Source: Forget Us Not handbook**

Report by SITI NUR AISHA OMAR  
omarsiti@sph.com.sg

### Poly student Nattasha Nina Alvinur had a grand-aunt with dementia who died about five years ago.

Her grand-aunt would get lost on her way home from a nearby temple. Nattasha would pray for her safety.

People in the neighbourhood would usually take her grand-aunt to the police station.

"It was heartening to know that someone helped her when they realised she was lost," said Nattasha, 17, a Diploma in Molecular Biotechnology first-year student at Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP).

Having had a relative with dementia has spurred Nattasha to raise awareness on the condition. She is one of 30 NYP students who have signed up as Dementia Friends.

The programme is part of the Forget Us Not (FUN) initiative, which was started by Lien Foundation and Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH) last year.

Yesterday was the official launch of the FUN initiative, which aims to improve awareness and understanding of dementia by encouraging the public to sign up as a Dementia Friend at [www.forgetusnot.sg](http://www.forgetusnot.sg)

Said Mr Lee Poh Wah, 45, Chief Executive Officer of Lien Foundation: "Because of its prevalence and high cost to society, we need to make dementia-friendly communities the

'new normal', starting with Yishun which has a high elderly population and established network of support from KTPH.

"We hope to reduce the stigma of dementia, and move from isolation and institutionalisation to inclusion."

Dementia Friends will receive a handbook with tips on recognising common symptoms of dementia, and what to do when encountering persons with dementia (PWD). They can also attend a training session conducted by KTPH.

### VALUED

Dr Philip Yap, 46, director of KTPH's Geriatric Centre, said: "We hope Yishun will be a place where PWDs feel included, respected and valued.

"Having such an initiative and a dementia-friendly community can help PWDs age in place and continue to stay plugged into society."

Nattasha said: "Dr Philip came to NYP to conduct a workshop on dementia last year and he encouraged us to sign up as Dementia Friends.

"Hopefully, more will sign up so we'll be a more dementia-friendly society.

"(After attending the workshop), I've learnt the signs and symptoms of dementia and the steps I should take when encountering PWDs.

"If I had the chance to interact with my grand-aunt now, I would patiently spend time with her, doing the things she likes best."

So far, the initiative has reached 6,795 people. Eleven schools and institutions of higher learning and 12 businesses and organisations have signed up as Dementia Friends.

One of the businesses is Capitol Optical at Northpoint Shopping Centre in Yishun. It was designated a dementia-friendly business after staff received dementia training.

Said Mr Steve Ho, 62, Capitol Optical's store manager and optician: "More of us should sign up to be a Dementia Friend to support people with dementia and their families because the journey can get very tough. This is what being an inclusive Singapore is about."

### HELPLINES

If you suspect your loved one has dementia, please contact:

**Khoo Teck Puat Hospital**  
Tel: 6555-8000  
Website: [www.ktph.com.sg](http://www.ktph.com.sg)

If your loved one already has dementia, learn about the different care services available at the Agency for Integrated Care  
Tel: 1800-650-6060  
Website: [www.silverpages.sg](http://www.silverpages.sg)