A Study Assessing the Health and Social Needs of Elderly Living Alone in Studio Apartments.

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Project Description:
The aim of the project is to investigate the status of elderly population living in the community, and to address the biopsychosocial needs based on research findings, so to implement models and recommendations to improve the health and social needs of the growing elderly population to ensure optimal healthy aging takes place. The objectives of the study are:

1. To collect information on elderly living alone: a) demographic profile - age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, religion, monthly income, employment, number of children, living arrangements, availability of carers, family support and b) health-related lifestyles (alcohol, smoking), medical conditions/ physical limitations, depression, cognitive impairment or dementia, medications, experience of falling (including location), self-rated health (overall, mental, physical), ability to perform independent activities of daily living, nutrition, psychological well-being, exercise, health and hygiene practices.

2. To assess how elderly living alone perform and manage self-care through home environment behaviors such as ability to check their homes for health and safety risks from accidents and falls (e.g. calling for help during emergencies, switching on lights, locking doors, cleaning, tidying clutter, food & cooking safety).

3. To explore the assistive resources utilized by elderly living alone – whether they make use of personal care, assistive devices or home modifications (including the types) in order to know how they adapt to compensating mechanisms given a loss in physical function.

4. To explore utilization of social support services such as senior activity centres, rehabilitation centres, home help services, day care centres, home therapy services, family service centres, special assistance funds etc, by elderly living alone as well as to identify other services or forms of assistance that could benefit them and address barriers to access or utilization of social service use, if any.

The study population will be selected from subjects used in research studies for the NUS Aging Integrative Research Cluster using a quota sampling strategy purposively designed on referrals from social service agencies, studio-apartment locations, and one-room rental flats. Residents aged 55 and
above living in Studio Apartments from a total of 1,861 households in Singapore have been approached from all units of Studio Apartments under 14 towns. A total of 1,861 households were approached from all multi-ethnic Singaporeans aged 55 years and above who have no severe cognitive impairment have been recruited where a one-hour face-to-face interview using a structured questionnaire addressing the above research questions of interest were conducted. From 1,861 households, 925 subjects were responded to the social survey from May 2012 to December 2012.