

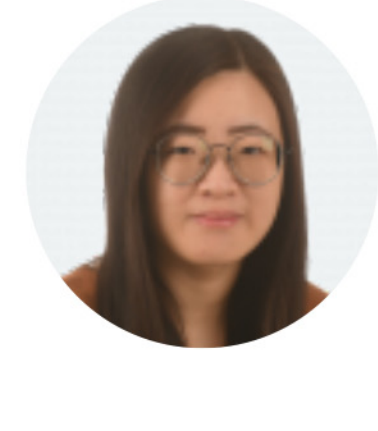


This Singapore hotel is using its leftover food to ultimately... feed other guests

Intervention programme has positive impact on children from low-income families in Singapore, study finds



Children who had been through Circle of Care showed improvements in health-related quality of life for over a year, in particular in physical and social functioning. PHOTO: ST FILE



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SINGAPORE - A local intervention programme meant to help children from low-income families has had a positive impact on them, a study showed.

Children who had been through Circle of Care, [a local interdisciplinary pre-school-based intervention programme](#), showed improvements in health-related quality of life for over a year, in particular in physical and school functioning.

This meant that they were better able to participate in activities independently and pay attention in class.

Launched in 2018 by the National University Hospital's Khoo Teck Puat-National University Children's Medical Institute, the study found that the community health screening and health education efforts under the Circle of Care programme brought the children significant benefits.

Circle of Care, first piloted in 2013, is run by Care Corner Singapore with support from the Lien Foundation and the Quantedge Foundation. It brings together social workers, educators, therapists, health specialists and community partners to support pre-schoolers and primary school children from low-income families.

The study, which evaluated the programme, screened 147 children under the Circle of Care programme and 304 of their peers from the same pre-schools.

Announcing the findings in a virtual media briefing on Tuesday (Feb 23), the study's principal investigator, Dr Chong Shang Chee, said: "There were really positive findings for (Circle of Care). This allowed us to remove some of the barriers to us reaching the children that were hard to reach."

She added: "Designing such place-based health models for the hardest-to-reach children helps to enhance early detection of health and developmental issues and informs parents of changing practices..."

"Singaporean children enjoy high quality healthcare generally, but there are some children from disadvantaged backgrounds who stand to benefit from more timely and early intervention for their development needs."

The study, which also looked at the health habits of children from low-income families, also found that they were getting poorer quality sleep than their peers despite having more hours of it.

They also had more screen time, less outdoor activity time, poorer dental health and less healthy eating habits.

Dr Chong, who also advises the Health Development Screening Programme at Circle of Care, noted that a majority of low-income parents were concerned about their children's health and development, with developmental needs, growth and nutrition and dental hygiene topping the list.

The study also found that there was a significant decrease in referral follow-ups for health issues picked up during health screening.

Despite 76.2 per cent of the children having issues, only 63.6 per cent followed through for polyclinic referrals, 40.4 per cent for child development referrals, 11.8 per cent for dental referrals and 15 per cent for specialist medical needs.

Some reasons included parents who were uncontactable, those who felt it was too much hassle and others who declined referrals to specialist clinics as they felt their child was doing "fine".