A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO WHOLE-LIFE HEALTH
Towards a responsive and integrated system

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Abstract

A holistic approach towards health takes into consideration the ‘environment’ in totality. Individuals are considered as parts of a network that comprises of the psychological, social and physical environments. The interaction of these three components is important in the development of the individual’s health and can significantly influence the physical and mental well-being.

This paper is based on observations and concerns with regards to the rise in the ageing population in Singapore and the changing landscape of the health environment. The dramatic development in information technology, medical science and the status of individuals, has brought about an increase in the problems and diseases related to ‘modern living’. This includes ‘social stress’ and urban stressors, created out of a social need to survive.

The scope of this paper will encompass three main aspects: -

1. The changing practices, customs and mindsets of individuals towards the notion of health.
2. The state of the environment that can influence behavioural patterns and attitudes in individuals, which in turn can contribute to the physical and mental health of the individuals.
3. The shifting paradigms of the health care environment.

Part One presents an overview of the fundamentals concerning individual health and the macro perspective of the health environment. The holistic approach to the health environment seeks to promote the notions of self-help, self-reliance, self-development and the concept of empowerment in individuals. It examines the concepts, practices and initiatives as devised in the promotion of health care.

Part Two focuses on the new health model. It discusses the holistic approach to health and proposes a new model. It examines the limitations and constraints of today’s built environment and identifies appropriate designs that can provide a conducive environment for the physical and mental well-being of individuals.

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