

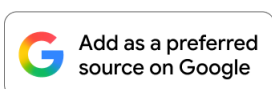
IMH launches nationwide study to gauge mental health of adults in Singapore

[Sign up now](#): Get ST's newsletters delivered to your inbox



A nurse helping an elderly patient at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH). PHOTO: ST FILE

Priscilla Goy



Published Oct 12, 2016, 11:00 AM



SINGAPORE - A nationwide survey to gauge the mental health of adults in Singapore will be carried out over the next year.

Led by the Institute of Mental Health (IMH), the study aims to reach at least 6,000 people aged 18 and above from a pool of about 15,500 randomly identified. Face-to-face interviews will be conducted in their homes.

The study will find out the prevalence of mental disorders, barriers to mental health treatment here, and the socio-cultural and economic impact of major mental disorders. These include the association with physical illnesses, the effect of mental illness on work productivity and how people here seek help for mental illness.

The survey, known as the Singapore Mental Health Study 2016, is the second of its kind. Findings from the survey will be compared with that of the first one in 2010.

The first survey gauged prevalence of mental disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and alcohol use. It found that the top three common disorders were major depressive disorder (5.8 per cent), alcohol abuse (3.1 per cent) and OCD (3 per cent).

The second survey will include psychiatric problems not studied in the first survey, such as schizophrenia, sleep disorder, and hoarding.

The latest study is a joint effort by IMH, the Ministry of Health (MOH), and Nanyang Technological University. Its principal investigator is Professor Chong Siow Ann, who is also the vice-chairman of IMH's medical board of research.

Said Prof Chong: "With the continuous growth of our population which now stands at 5.61 million, there is a need to review the state of the population's mental health.

"(The latest study) would also give us a good sense of how the mental health landscape has changed in the years since that first landmark study."

The results can also be used to guide national policies and planning to meet the mental health needs of Singapore, he added.

MOH and the Singapore Millennium Foundation is funding this three-year \$4.9 million project, which started in April 2015. The initial phase involved tasks such as the design of the study and

training of interviewers. The survey will last for about a year from its launch on Wednesday (Oct 12) and is expected to be completed by December 2017.

At the end of the confidential survey, which will take an average of two hours, participants will be given \$60.

IMH director of research Mythily Subramaniam said: "Those who have been selected to participate will be part of an impactful study on the mental well-being of the nation. As the accuracy of the findings will depend on the information they provide, their participation and full support in this exercise are critical."

See more on

Mental health

Surveys