

PHARMACY WEEK 2019

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It has been said that prevention is better than cure. Hence, the theme of this year's Pharmacy Week, "Own Your Health, Staying One Step Ahead" was coined. The aim was to raise awareness of health ownership in the general public and the focus was on primary and secondary health prevention. Primary prevention focused on health supplements, vaccinations and travel medications. As for secondary prevention, we focused on the management of chronic conditions via the utilisation of the Patient Medication List (PML), proper storage of medications and on how to reduce the risk of falls.



***President of the 113th Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore Council,
Ms Irene Quay, giving the opening address at the annual health carnival***

The main committee for PW2019 comprised of heads of the four sub-committees namely public education, publicity, sponsorship, and logistics. They had put together a series of initiatives that were rolled out in installments in the lead up to the annual health carnival that was held on the 20th October 2019 at Kampung Admiralty. Moving on from last year's collaboration with the Central Community Development Council (Central CDC), the team decided to collaborate with the North West CDC, to continue our public education efforts in a different part of Singapore. This year, we had the honour to have Mr Khaw Boon Wan, Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure and Minister for Transport, Grassroots Adviser to the Sembawang GROs to grace the event.



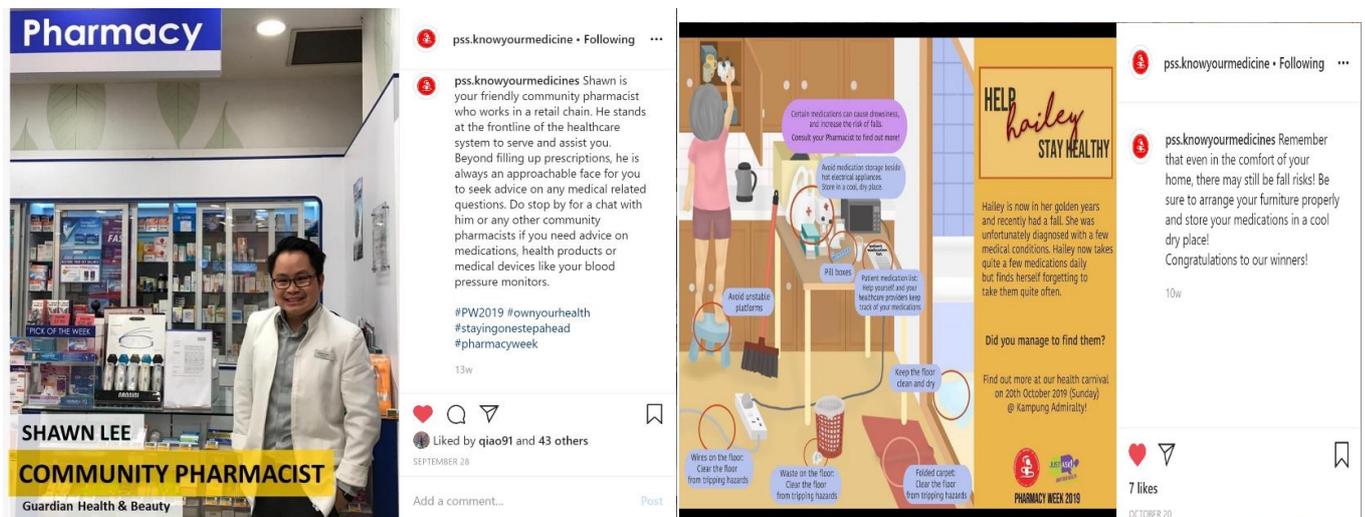
***Group photograph with our Guest-of-Honour Mr Khaw Boon Wan, PSS Council Members,
PW 2019 Organising Committee and President of NUS Pharmaceutical Society (NUSPS)***

The logistics sub-committee had designed a series of educational posters to be used in various healthcare institutions. One of these posters provided concise information on the Human Papillomavirus Vaccine (HPV) that had increased public interest due to the government's move to

encourage uptake of this vaccine through the school-based HPV vaccination programme announced in March this year. We also invited Ms Lim Kae Shin, Principal Pharmacist, KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital, to give a public talk on the Pharmacist’s perspective of the HPV vaccination at the health carnival itself, which was a great way to round up our public education efforts on this issue.

The "Faces of Pharmacy", which featured pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy students from different backgrounds, kick-started the external publicity for Pharmacy Week 2019. This short write-up, featured on our Facebook and Instagram pages, aimed to showcase the various roles and abilities that Pharmacy staff have, how people entered the profession, and to encourage the uptake of relevant Pharmacy services to members of the public.

In addition, there was also a comic series “Help Hailey Stay Healthy” done up. Through a fictional character Hailey, the public was educated on how they can stay healthy through the various stages of life. The focus was on the importance of vaccination, travel medication and how to reduce falls. This comic was hosted on our social media pages and was put up on the huge LCD screen at Kampung Admiralty where members of the public could send in their suggestions via their mobile phones. Participation was encouraged with vouchers for the first 3 lucky winners sent in their correct answers to the health choices hidden in the comic. The team was also onsite to explain why these choices were correct and to ensure that participants not only had fun but found meaning behind this activity as well.



Social Media Publicity

The public education sub-committee planned the main bulk of activities at the health carnival. Through their hard work, they put together a full day of educational, engaging and fun-filled activities catered for the public. Under the primary prevention umbrella, the focus was on vaccinations, especially adult vaccinations as an effective way to prevent infectious diseases and indirectly reduce antimicrobial resistance. The vaccinations booth also featured a game of “Truth or False” which helped to debunk common myths about vaccinations. Through educational booth exhibitions and public talks on influenza and HPV vaccines, we hoped to increase public awareness on the importance and benefits of adult vaccinations to boost herd immunity and keep our community healthy.



Pharmacist explaining the game concept

Members of the public sat down with pharmacists who guided them through the PML creation process, and they learned first-hand how on it should be done and the benefits of owning one. Notably, certain medications can increase the risk of falls. Falls prevention was also an important focus of secondary prevention as falls can often result in serious consequences on one's health and quality of life. Pharmacists educated the public through informative posters and engaged in an activity where they had to sort medications into those that can increase falls risk and those that did not. External risk factors of falls are also important and mini dollhouses that were done up like an average Singaporean home where participants had to identify items in that house that could potentially cause falls, tried to educate the public on that. Pharmacists then debriefed and educate the participants on these external risk factors e.g. cluttered homes that can increase fall risk and methods of fall prevention.



Pharmacists explaining the game concept



Media Coverage by Shin Min Daily News

This carnival had successfully attracted more than 1000 participants in the North West region of Singapore and the responses from the survey results showed an improvement in terms of the knowledge towards utilisation of primary prevention strategies and the management of their chronic conditions. The carnival was also covered in the press by Shin Min Daily News. We would like to thank all our volunteers, community partners as well as sponsors for their support in making this annual health carnival a success for everyone.

Reported by: Ms Debra Cheah
Ms Waseemah Begum