

**PIONEER GENERATION PACKAGE  
REQUIRES MEANS-TESTING: EXPERTS**

# 'Scheme should integrate social care needs'

**SINGAPORE** – Healthcare experts welcomed the three areas of support in the Pioneer Generation Package outlined by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, but noted that the integration of social care needs of these older Singaporeans should not be neglected.

Although Mr Lee pledged that more help would be given to the older among those who qualify for healthcare benefits (defined as those 65 years and above this year) and that people who do not qualify would not be left behind, experts still suggested some form of means-testing for the package, so those who need help most would receive the Government's support for medical expenses.

Dr Phua Kai Hong from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore (NUS) said: "You need two tiers — the first tier can be defined by age, but the next stage has to be a stronger means test based on needs. Otherwise, there will not be enough."

However, Senior Minister of State (Finance and Transport) Josephine Teo noted that the package should be seen as an additional layer of support for those in the pioneer generation.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an event paying tribute to pioneers living in Bishan North yesterday, she said: "Bear in mind that the Pioneer Generation Package is being built on top of existing enhancements that we are already planning and these will include enhancements for MediShield Life and enhancements to healthcare support for the broader population of Singaporeans."

She added that the cut-off age of 65 is a suitable one and was decided after public feedback, which noted that people of that generation started working at a younger age.

Other observers felt help for "non-hospital" aspects, such as the integration of social services, could have been included to strengthen the safety nets for these older Singaporeans.

Said Dr Jeremy Lim, who heads the health and life sciences practice in Asia for global consulting firm Oliver Wyman: "The experience of Singapore should be like many other countries, where the dichotomy between healthcare and social services is artificial and often unhelpful if we regard health to include mitigation of risk factors such as fall hazards ..."

Singapore Management University Associate Professor of Law Eugene Tan noted that while it was a timely gesture, the package could have gone beyond healthcare needs. "It would have been good to use the package to enable them to get more out of their retirement, pick up a new skill or keep their minds active." **SUMITASREEDHARAN**



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**Dr Jeremy Lim**  
HEAD OF HEALTH  
AND LIFE SCIENCES  
PRACTICE IN  
ASIA FOR GLOBAL  
CONSULTING FIRM  
OLIVER WYMAN