

National University of Singapore

Department of Global Studies

GL4102: Global Taskforce

Taskforce Report

The Accessibility of Healthcare for the Elderly in an E-clusive Singapore

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Executive Summary

As the Singapore government embarks the country on the road to become a ‘Smart Nation’, considerations must be made on whether its citizens are catching up or are left on the wrong side of the digital divide, exacerbating existing structural socioeconomic inequalities. In particular, we question the accessibility of healthcare for marginalized individuals, namely elderly Singaporeans who would benefit the most from this digital revolution. After 4 months of research, we have investigated possible solutions for addressing healthcare of elderly persons through technology. In this, we identify major stakeholders: the government, voluntary welfare organizations (VWOs) and healthcare professionals, technology startups, the elderly, and most importantly - informal caregivers. We found that the perception of informal caregivers and elderly towards the use of healthcare technologies play a major role. It is shown that elderly are generally unwilling to adopt Smart Nation technologies. Instead they would likely see better results if given to their caregivers. However, implicating this is the lack of awareness of relevant technological solutions for healthcare. Furthermore, there is a severe lack of awareness in addressing the physical and mental needs of informal caregivers. As Singaporeans continue to grow older, so too will the strain on their families and friends, which has yet to be acknowledged and addressed.

We thus propose 2 policy recommendations of ‘Care for Caregivers’ and ‘Equipping Caregivers’ and building a tripartite platform of interaction amongst informal and formal caregivers, and technology startups. The policy recommendations aim at addressing informal caregivers’ needs and alleviating their stress by providing them with caregiving knowledge and information on technologies. By reducing the physical and mental labour of caregiving and allowing for more social interaction time between the caregiver and elderly, the policies thereby seek to bring holistic care for the elderly. Accessibility of healthcare can be improved for informal caregivers and elderly Singaporeans by increasing informal caregivers’ awareness to technologies. A system of communications and collaboration will encouraged the formation of future technologies and solutions that directly tackle the needs of the elderly that would encourage less resistance.