

# From Clinic to Community:

## How GPs are sparking active lifestyles

by the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC)



*In this interview, we speak with Dr Teo Cheng Rong from Healthway Medical to learn how he is helping patients stay active by connecting them with community programmes, one conversation at a time.*



Dr Teo has always championed lifestyle modifications to improve health outcomes. However, access to information on available community resources used to be less structured.

“Before Healthier SG, these community programmes existed but we didn’t have good visibility,” he notes.

This has since changed. Digital tools like EventsGoWhere and the Healthy 365 app now make it easier for Dr Teo to have conversations with patients on lifestyle changes and recommend them to participate in nearby activities.

### Timing the Conversation

Over his 10 years of practicing at Healthway Medical, Dr Teo has found a formula to nudge patients towards a healthier lifestyle more effectively.

“You can’t just say ‘be more active’ and expect it to stick,” he explains. “It is about timing and personalising the recommendation.”

Dr Teo typically introduces community-based lifestyle programmes to his patients once rapport has been established.

“Usually by the second or third visit, they have gained some momentum. That gives me the opportunity to say, ‘Would you like to try something lifestyle-related?’”

### Matching the Right Programme to the Right Patient

Dr Teo’s recommendations are always tailored to each patient’s capacity and interests. Active patients may try intensive exercises such as jogging, while older

adults may benefit from less-intense activities like balloon sculpting, karaoke or the “Move It, Feel Strong” programme by the Health Promotion Board (HPB) which incorporates strength, balance and flexibility exercises into workout routines like Zumba Gold. Apps like Healthy 365, which incentivise users to engage in activities such as step counting, moderate to vigorous exercise, sleep tracking, and meal logging, can effectively motivate participation.

“I’ve had patients telling me they can’t make evening appointments because they have Zumba classes,” he laughs. “That’s a good problem to have.”

In some cases, matching patients to the right programme also brings relief to caregivers. Dr Teo recalls a particularly moving case involving a dementia patient and his daughter, who was struggling to manage his care. Withdrawn and showing signs of behavioural decline, the elderly patient had little to anchor his days. However, a simple recommendation to visit a nearby Active Ageing Centre (AAC) spurred a transformation.

“He started looking forward to karaoke sessions, and his daughter said it was the first time in years he felt alive again.”

*Seniors can stay active by participating in HPB programmes available in their neighbourhoods.*



PHOTO CREDIT: HPB



## Personalising with Digital Tools

To streamline referrals, Dr Teo relies on EventsGoWhere to search for suitable programmes by location, activity type and intensity. For most patients, he recommends using Healthy 365 to find and sign up for nearby programmes on their own. For those who need more help, he provides printed options or directly reaches out to programme coordinators.

Personalisation also plays a key role. Dr Teo would filter and shortlist activities based on the patient's postal code, routine, lifestyle and interests.

"I did that recently for a patient," he recalls. "He and his wife were glad to have something to look forward to."

## Strengthening the GP-Patient Relationship

Dr Teo believes that incorporating lifestyle interventions into care plans does more than improve physical health; it can strengthen the doctor-patient connection.

"When patients see that we care about more than just lab results, it builds confidence. We are showing them we care about their lives, not just their charts."

He often shares his own participation in HPB's personalised digital health programmes with patients, to create a shared experience.

**"It becomes less about prescribing and more about partnering. When they feel better physically and emotionally, they become more engaged. That's the long-term value."**

## Working through the Challenges

Still, barriers remain. Limited consultation time, inconsistent follow-up and patient hesitation can all pose challenges.

"Sometimes a patient is open to change but you miss the window. Or they're hesitant because it's unfamiliar," Dr Teo explains. "That's why continuity in primary care matters so much. We build trust over time."

For GPs who are unsure where to begin, Dr Teo offers a simple message: start small.

"We are all busy. No one expects you to overhaul your practice overnight. But even just visiting a nearby AAC once during your off hours can change your perspective."

He encourages his peers to build relationships with community partners, explore online tools and resources such as the Primary Care Pages, or speak with their AIC account managers for guidance.

As Singapore moves towards a more preventive and person-centric healthcare model, the GP's role as connectors to community, activity and hope becomes more essential than ever.

"I think it starts with all of us – doctors, dietitians and physiotherapists – bringing up the topic," Dr Teo reflects. "But we shouldn't just tell patients what to do. We need to show them how and where."

"Sometimes, what matters most isn't a lab result. It is being able to keep playing guitar or going for a walk. Those things mean a lot to people, and it is our job to see them as whole persons."

## How to use the HealthierSGEventsGoWhere Portal



Enter the postal code or activity name to search for Healthy Lifestyle Activities

2

Select the preferred language

1



HealthierSGEventsGoWhere

Enter your postal code or the activity name to search for a Community Lifestyle

Type postal code or activity name

Filter by intensity, popularity or by HPB and community partners

3

Updated as of 11 Jun 2024

Sort By Filters

Showing 968 result(s) matching 'Zumba'

SLOTS AVAILABLE

Zumba

11 Bedok North Street 1 Heartbeat at Bedok Active Health Lab, S459562 GP

02875620

Zumba

Print the first 20 results for the patient

4

Print



EventsGoWhere

## Getting Active with Patients

- **Start the conversation.** Lifestyle does not need to be a separate topic; introduce it naturally as part of ongoing care.
- **Leverage on available tools.** Use EventsGoWhere or Healthy 365 to help patients access programmes by location, intensity and interest.
- **Encourage tech-savvy patients** to take charge of their health journey by exploring lifestyle apps such as Healthy 365 and get rewarded for participating in challenges and programmes.
- **Connect with the AAC or community services near your clinic** to build networks that support your patients' long-term well-being.



AAC Near Me