

# FORUM

## Letter of the day

### Help stay-at-home dads with the challenges they face

I welcome the shift that is happening in Singapore (Straits Times, June 5) in which more men are choosing to stay home to look after their families, as it means that both parents can be involved in raising their children.

It also helps break down gender stereotypes, as it shows that men can be just as nurturing as women. But stay-at-home dads still face many challenges, one being that it can be isolating. A man who is the only one in his neighbourhood or social circle to stay home with his

children may have feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Another challenge is that stay-at-home dads often have a hard time getting back into the workforce after taking a break from work to raise children.

There is still a stigma attached to men who take on this role. Employers may see them as less desirable candidates since they do not have recent experience in their field, or may doubt their ability to commit fully to working again.

I believe that we should do more to raise awareness about stay-at-home dads and provide

them with more support.

First, we need to change society's perception that it is automatically mothers who should take on the role of caregiver to their children.

We also need to provide these fathers with better resources such as childcare subsidies or job training so that they can be better equipped for the job market after becoming a stay-at-home dad.

Finally, we need to celebrate these fathers for making this important choice and show them that they are not alone in this journey.

Chong Sing Xiang

**There is still a stigma attached to men who take on the role of stay-at-home dad. Employers may see them as less desirable candidates since they do not have recent experience in their field, or may doubt their ability to commit fully to working again.**

**The nurturing of character and good values requires certain indispensable factors, among them quality time.**

DR QUEK KOH CHOON

### Jobs • Do Singaporeans really lack the right skills and experience?

Whenever the issue of foreign talent is debated, I often get the impression that there are not enough Singaporeans with the right skill sets and experience to fill all the jobs created here, and that Singapore needs to welcome foreigners.

However, my own experience applying for jobs as well as the

experiences of others in Singapore (Business graduate pines the roads as private-hire driver 10 hours a day, June 5) lead me to question whether employers are really considering Singaporean candidates who have qualifications and experience that are related to the job.

Lee Hing

### Jobs • Hard to reconcile job hunt with labour shortage complaints

I am perplexed that Mr Jeevan John Menon, who has a university degree, has been unable to find a suitable job after being retrenched last August (Business graduate pines the roads as private-hire driver 10 hours a day, June 5).

While working as a private-hire driver for the past nine months, he has been actively job hunting. He said prospective employers believe he has not been doing a "proper job" since his retrenchment.

I find it puzzling that employers would not give Mr Menon, with his degree and willingness to accept a lower salary, a chance to prove his abilities.

There is an even higher possibility of job mismatch for elderly retrenched workers who are often overlooked by employers.

I cannot reconcile Mr Menon's job-hunting setbacks with employers lamenting a labour shortage.

Foo Sing Kheng

#### SHARE IT

If you spot something interesting, take a picture and send it to [stforum@spoh.com.sg](mailto:stforum@spoh.com.sg) together with a detailed caption and your comments, and we can consider publishing it. Our guidelines on Forum letters apply.

### Digital IC • Camp did not allow me to use it for IPPT registration

On Sunday, I was disappointed when I was not allowed to attempt my individual physical proficiency test (IPPT) at Khayam Camp without displaying my physical NRIC.

I was under the impression that the digital IC in the Singpass app could be used to access public services, but this was not the case at this camp.

The staff there said other servicemen had raised the same issue.

The staff also told me that due to safety reasons, my physical IC was needed in case there was an emergency and I required medical assistance while attempting my IPPT.

I had to postpone my IPPT, and find that administrative hurdles had minimised any service that can serve our nation in the most time-efficient manner possible.

Nathaniel Chong Jun Kang

### Digital IC • All organisations here should accept its use

I was at a branch of the Automobile Association of Singapore (AAS) on Friday to apply for an international driving permit.

When asked to produce my NRIC and driving licence, I showed an employee my digital NRIC and driving licence on the Singpass app. But I was shocked to be told that both were not acceptable and only the physical documents could be used.

When I informed her that the digital NRIC and driving licence are now accepted by many institutions, she replied that this applied to only government agencies and not private

institutions like AAS.

The digital NRIC is accepted as proof of identity for more than 2,000 digital and in-person services, even for account opening and loan applications at banks. I have used the digital NRIC with other private institutions too.

It is thus puzzling that an established organisation like AAS refuses to recognise digital versions of the NRIC and driving licence.

While I agree that physical documents may be needed when we are abroad, the digital versions on the Singpass app should be accepted by all in Singapore.

Kate Ho Koon Ho

### Littering • Keep Singapore's waterways free from trash

I refer to the report, "Spore launches national strategy to tackle growing problem of marine litter" (June 5).

I joined a kayak waterways clean-up at Marina Reservoir in January. Although the waterways looked clean, I picked up a lot of trash like plastic straws, plastic bottles and plastic bags.

Reducing waste is important, and it's equally important to bin

our trash correctly and not throw it into our waterways. Let us all do our part in keeping Singapore's waterways and seas clean.

Perhaps we can start to educate students from a young age, and make beach and waterway clean-up part of the school curriculum. As a secondary school student, I remember going to East Coast Park to pick up trash.

Emily Yap Yung An



Adults should have adequate time to interact with their children and spouse, and to focus on bringing up children with the right values which in turn would benefit society as a whole, says the writer. ST FILE PHOTO

### Families • Barriers to creating strong bonds also leading to health issues among parents

It is good news to hear that the Government will continue to foster a Singapore made for families, with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong saying that strong families are the bedrock of our society (PM: Spore will continue to strengthen family support, June 5).

There are some obstacles to achieving this objective that are also contributing to health problems in the community.

Take the need for family time. Adults should have adequate time to interact with their children and spouse, and to focus on bringing up children with the right values which in turn would benefit society as a whole.

Time is required, and it is in the context of interaction that values are transmitted and character is developed.

However, many young parents among my patients complain of long hours at work with little time left for family and exercise.

Some even told me they would rather have more free time than pay raises. Many lamented that there is no way out as their work and responsibilities demand commitment and, if they opt out, it would possibly end their chances of being promoted.

Related to this problem, I see many patients coming down with severe migraine, insomnia, anxiety, palpitations and gastritis – all related to work stress as well as problems with a lack of a healthy lifestyle, accompanied by family problems.

With both parents working long hours, there is little time for the children. With a lack of supervision, discipline problems emerge, and I am seeing more cases of video game addiction, pornography addiction, synthetic drug addiction, vaping and smoking among the young.

During consultations, I often encounter young people who display rudeness and disrespect

towards their parents even when I am present.

Parents cannot expect schools to take over their responsibilities to exercise discipline and instill good values in their children. The schools can supplement and complement the roles of parents, but they should not be expected to be a replacement.

Parents with little time for their children often shatter them with gifts and also tend to put much more emphasis on educational results and achievements.

But education (in just attaining good results) is not the final answer. The nurturing of character and good values requires certain indispensable factors, among them quality time, good and positive examples, the transmission of important values and the willingness to accept one another in the spirit of love and humility.

Quek Koh Choon (Dr)

#### Replies

### Littering • Keep Singapore clean as it's our home

We thank Mr Liu-Chan (Residents can do their part to pick up trash near their home, May 24) and other like-minded residents for helping to keep Singapore clean.

We agree with Mr Liu that we can all help to pick up trash. It is

exactly what this year's Keep Clean, Singapore campaign emphasises. All Singapore residents share the task of keeping Singapore clean because "It's not a job, it's our home".

Singapore is our home, and we

hope that more people will do what Mr Liu shared in her letter. Better still if everyone throws his trash into rubbish bins.

Edward D'Silva

Chairman

Public Hygiene Council

### Healthcare • Buy supplements from legitimate sources

I refer to the Forum letters, "Tighter regulation of health supplements needed" (May 24) by Mr Gary Teo Teck Chye, and "Risk-based approach taken in regulating health supplements" (May 28) by the Health Sciences Authority (HSA).

Singapore consumers are

fortunate that HSA is a highly respected authority recognised by the World Health Organisation as operating at an advanced level of performance and continuous improvement.

What may not be as well recognised is the Health Supplements Industry

Association (Singapore), or HSIAS – a national industry grouping of established health supplement companies in Singapore supplying over 90 per cent of the health supplement products sold in Singapore and formed at the encouragement of HSA in 2001.

HSIAS members adhere to a strict code of ethics, and are a legitimate and reliable source from which consumers can procure quality health supplements.

Our members' products comply with Singapore health supplement regulations and should be the first point of

consideration for consumers. A list of HSIAS members and their products can be found on our website (<https://www.hsias.org.sg>). HSIAS echoes HSA's warning for consumers to beware of products sold online, especially those with exaggerated health claims. HSIAS also aims to contribute to

preventive healthcare, as health supplements can be part of a preventive healthcare strategy to reduce healthcare costs and improve quality of life.

Doreen Tan (Dr)

President

Health Supplements Industry Association (Singapore)

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**DR QUEK KOH CHOON**

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**Doreen Tan (Dr)**

President  
Health Supplements Industry Association (Singapore)



# Forum: Buy health supplements from legitimate sources

PUBLISHED 8 HOURS AGO



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**Doreen Tan (Dr)**

President

Health Supplements Industry Association (Singapore)



This could be you after retirement.

Find out how

## Forum: Risk-based approach taken in regulating health supplements

PUBLISHED 28 MAY 2022, 2:00 AM SGT



We thank Mr Gary Teo Teck Chye for his feedback ([Tighter regulation of health supplements needed](#), May 24).

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) takes a risk-based approach in regulating health products.

Health supplements are commonly taken to enhance health and are not meant to prevent, treat, cure or alleviate diseases or medical conditions. Their ingredients are generally recognised to be safe for consumption. Hence, a lighter-touch regulatory approach is adopted compared with medicines.

There are safety measures in place to safeguard public health. For example, medicinal ingredients are prohibited in the supplements, and the amount of heavy metals cannot exceed safe dose limits.

Dealers must ensure their products meet HSA's stipulated safety and quality requirements. Dealers must also ensure that the claims on their products are not false or mislead the public into believing that the products prevent, treat or cure diseases or medical conditions.

To further protect consumers, HSA performs post-market surveillance and monitoring. This includes monitoring adverse event reports, routine testing of products in the market and investigating feedback from consumers.

HSA will take necessary action to address quality or safety concerns detected with health supplements marketed locally. This includes working with companies to remove the products from sale, and taking enforcement action against unscrupulous dealers or illegal suppliers.

The public is alerted to harmful ingredients detected in health supplements via press releases and the HSA website. The five products which Mr Teo read about in the news were sold online and detected through HSA's safety monitoring measures.

Even with these safeguards in place, consumers should be cautious when buying health supplements. As a general rule, they should buy products from reliable sources like pharmacies, reputable retailers or websites with an established retail presence in Singapore.

Consumers should also be wary of products with exaggerated or misleading claims, such as "100 per cent safe" or "effectiveness guaranteed". Any health supplement that claims to produce rapid results to improve health should be viewed with caution. When unsure of the right product for a particular need, they should consult a doctor or pharmacist.

**Lee Hui Keng**

Director (Covering)

Complementary Health Products Branch

Health Products Regulation Group

Health Sciences Authority

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# Forum: Tighter regulation of health supplements needed

PUBLISHED 24 MAY 2022, 2:00 AM SGT



Health supplements sold in Singapore should be registered with the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) and tested for compliance with HSA's safety and quality standards.

The packaging of health supplements may conveniently omit potent substances, and unscrupulous dealers may claim that their health supplements comply with HSA standards when they do not.

On Dec 30 last year, HSA announced that it had found potent adulterants in five products that were marketed on local e-commerce and social media platforms ([HSA warns of potent adulterants, banned substance in 5 products](#), Jan 1). HSA issued warnings to the sellers of those products.

It is better for HSA to take preventive steps rather than step in to test products only after customers report adverse effects. By then, unsuspecting consumers would already have consumed the supplements, and it would take even more time and effort to issue alerts and product recalls.

**Gary Teo Teck Chye**

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HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY