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Promoting healthier diet for elderly

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Magicians and clowns entertaining the elderly at the home.

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YOUR diet today will determine the life you live in the years to come.

No matter your age or eating habits, it is never too late to change your diet to improve the way you think and feel.

To instill the idea that age should not deter one from eating healthy, Ajinomoto (M) Bhd (AMB) in collaboration with International Medical University (IMU) and Rumah Victory Elderly Home, have come up with a one-year programme called "Eat Well, Live Well Together with Umami".

The programme for the elderly aims to improve meal preparation and appetite by modifying and creating the recipes prepared for the elderly to ensure a balanced meal.

It is part of the Ajinomoto Shared Value initiative and also IMU Cares – the community service arm of the university which hopes to address the overuse of salt in various forms and create healthier options.

The home was selected as IMU Cares has been working with it the past five years.



Residents of Rumah Victory Elderly Home enjoying herbal chicken rice and spinach soup with wolfberries and egg, taken from a new set of recipes created by Ajinomoto and IMU to promote a healthier diet for the elderly.

The close partnership was developed by Prof Khor Geok Lin, who was formerly with IMU. The programme gives students an opportunity to communicate with the elderly and use the skills learned in the classroom to help them at the home.

AMB corporate communications head Lau Chin Mun said the programme began in April last year and IMU was engaged for its medical expertise.

The project kicked off in January at Rumah Victory and will end in June.

A lot of planning went into creating the programme, which included a thorough pre-study of the elderly living in Victory Home, a detailed plan of implementation together with monitoring and assessment of the current diet and health status of each individual.

"We are targeting the elderly because the population of the elderly is getting bigger so we are looking to improve their dietary intake," she said.

Lau added that many people didn't know the facts about Ajinomoto.



IMU students measuring the weight of an elderly person.

"Umami is actually the fifth basic taste in our tongue. The umami taste comes from glutamate and that is the key component of Ajinomoto."

"Ajinomoto cannot replace salt. The correct way to use it is to add Ajinomoto, a flavour enhancer first, then taste your food, only then you should add salt if needed. If you follow this, you can reduce your salt intake by 30%."

Both parties monitor the progress of the programme in the home, once every month.

Lau said the plan was not easy to implement as the cooks were used to their way of cooking and change can be tough.

As such, a project assistant was appointed to teach the cooks two new recipes a day for the past three months. The cooks are also given kitchen hygiene training.

The cook prepares meals for 65 people, 55 of whom are the elderly in Rumah Victory and uses the 56 new recipes in the cookbook to prepare meals.

On the day of the visit with the media, the mood in the home was lifted by magicians and clowns who spent the first half of the day entertaining the elderly before lunch was served.



The collaboration aims to improve the dietary intake and health of the elderly.

For lunch, they had a healthy serving of spinach soup with wolfberries and egg, with herbal chicken rice, prepared using the recipe provided.

IMU nutrition and dietetics head of division Dr Snigdha Misra said the project made a difference.

"The preparation of food, is healthier," she said, adding that vegetable wastage had also been reduced.

AMB and IMU Cares plan to take the nutritional programme to other homes for the elderly in the Klang Valley.

The book will be translated into other languages.



The cook at Rumah Victory Elderly Home in Puchong preparing spinach soup using the new recipe taught by the culinary experts.

IMU external affairs director Prof Ong Kok Hai said the major problem among the elderly was malnutrition caused by loss of appetite.

The programme, he said, taught those who manage elderly homes to prepare balanced meals and provide better care.

The home's general superintendent Pang Foo Wei said they had wanted to improve its recipes but didn't know how to go about it.