

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

From the Editors	P.1
My Volunteer Journey with the CVS, by Magdalene Cheung	P.2-3
Boosting your Immunity	P.4-5
Lifelong Learning	P.6
Who are our visitors?	P.7
Volunteers Needed!	P.7
Brain Teasers	P.8

From the Editors

Welcome to the Winter Edition of CVS Newsletter. This year, winter has arrived early! We can all feel the chill in the morning and at dusk. So layer up, have warming food and drink, stay mobile and exercise to keep the blood flow.

MAINTAINING GOOD SELF-CARE

With the ever-changing COVID-19 situation, it is important to be maintaining good self-care. This includes eating well, getting some fresh air each day, keeping to a regular sleep schedule and staying connected with friends and family members. By maintaining good mental health, we are able to better manage stressful situations and bounce back from challenges.

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST INFLUENZA THIS WINTER

Hospital and laboratory surveillance continue to show an increase in influenza activity across NSW, indicating an early commencement to the influenza season and a rapid increase in reported cases. (Source: NSW Health)

Influenza (flu) is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. People with flu typically experience some or all of the following symptoms:

- fever and chills
- cough, sore throat and runny or stuffy nose
- muscle aches, joint pains, headaches and fatigue (feeling very tired)
- nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea (more common in children than adults).

If you are sick with flu, stay at home and avoid close contact with other people to prevent them from also becoming sick. This is especially important if you visit people who are more likely to get really sick if they get the flu - including pregnant women, infants, older people or people in hospital or residential aged care. (Source: NSW Ministry of Health. 2 May 2022)

To boost your immunity and protect your family for the winter season, please get a flu shot if you haven't done so yet. This is especially important if you are at higher risk of severe illness from the flu. Free flu vaccinations are now available to all NSW residents over the age of 6 months until 17th July.

FACE-TO-FACE VISITS

In the past month or so, many visitors have resumed visiting their friends in person as per the RACF's Covid-19 guidelines. We have heard heart-warming experiences of emotional reunions between friends who could not believe they could still recognise each other.

Unfortunately, isolation has had an impact on some of our friend's wellbeing. Visitors are hoping that the return to face-to-face interactions will revert this situation.

MAGDALENE'S VOLUNTEERING JOURNEY

Magdalene Cheung is one of the founding visitors who is still with the CVS. Over the years, Magdalene has learnt that *"Ageing is part of the process of life. Visiting residents in nursing homes helps me see that we can finish the last part of our journey gracefully. Each resident has their own story to tell and each one of them has experiences to share that I cannot find from books. Most important of all, I find that by visiting these people, I am getting more from life than I give. I've learnt a lot from them."* Read Magdalene's inspiring journey on page 2 & 3 of the newsletter.

Although we are not able to meet you as often as we would have hoped because of the unstable pandemic situation, our hearts are always with you. Just be positive, we shall move on and overcome this difficult time very soon.

All the very best,
Valerie CHU & Jeannie TAM

My Volunteer Journey with the CVS

By Magdalene Cheung

Back in 1996, a good friend of mine, Helen, was volunteering with the Community Visitors Scheme, visiting aged care home residents near her home. She told me her visiting experience and stories of those older folks. Those stories instantly reminded me of my mum whom I left behind when I migrated to Australia in 1984.

During my parents' final years, they were living in a Catholic nursing home in Hong Kong. My father passed away prior to my departure. I felt very sad to leave mum in such a situation as I was her only daughter. Knowing that I would be moving to Australia for good, the nuns at the nursing home organized a volunteer visitor for my mum. As mum was illiterate, the volunteer visitor would help her write letters to me so I could keep in touch with her. The volunteer would also read my letters to her. I was extremely grateful to this volunteer who had become a very good friend of mum till she passed away in 1991.

So when Helen asked if I would also be interested in volunteering for the Community Visitors Scheme, I was so glad that she asked me and I jumped at the opportunity. It was 1996. Veronica and Valerie were the coordinators of the program. After they interviewed me and explained to me in detail the rights and responsibility of a volunteer, the dos and don'ts and issues faced by elderly people, etc, I was organised to meet an elderly person in a nursing home.

My visiting journey starts

The first resident I visited was an elderly gentleman. He was bedridden but able to have a conversation. At times, he could be very confused. We would talk about the TV program that he was watching. The program was in English and he could not quite follow the storyline. But he would still like to have a chat about the program. I would then retell the story to him in a simple way in Cantonese. It was difficult for him to communicate with the staff because he did not speak much English. His wife was also unable to communicate with the staff. I was so happy that I was able to support him with his language and help communicate

his needs to the staff. He seemed to be feeling more relaxed with my presence and he always welcomed me with a big smile.

The second resident I visited was also in the same aged care facility, with similar conditions - also bedridden. Like the previous gentleman I visited, he was having difficulties communicating with the staff. He also did not speak English. He always loved to see me. He treated me as one of his daughters.

After their passing, I was assigned to visit a few other residents in a Chinese aged care home where most staff were able to communicate with the residents in their mother tongue. It made such a difference to their quality of life.

When a job opportunity appeared in 2001, I stopped the visiting role. Throughout those working years, I missed seeing and visiting those older people whom I had established a friendship with.



My visiting journey resumes

So when I finally decided to retire in 2009, I returned to the Community Visitors Scheme. At that time, I was visiting a lady in Chatswood who had no family and living with dementia. She was totally isolated and was staying in her room most of the day. Every time when I visited her, I would take her out to the garden to have some fresh air. We would also take a walk in the garden. She enjoyed being in the garden, in the outdoor and having some fresh air. She loved my company. Unfortunately, when the

facility closed down, she was transferred to another facility which was too far for me to travel to. I felt so sad that I could not continue to visit her. I was hoping that the new facility would organise another volunteer visitor to keep her company.

After the farewell, I was introduced to a resident in a nearby aged care facility where there were a few other Chinese residents. While I was visiting and chatting to this elderly lady, other Chinese ladies came to join us as well. Although elderly and in a wheelchair, she had a very positive attitude and was young at heart. She taught me and demonstrated to me some finger exercises which would help with blood circulation and prevent arthritis. Thanks to her coaching, so far I have no arthritis in my fingers. There was a lot of fun.

At present, I am visiting another Chinese lady from China who has no family here. When I first met her, she was suffering from a stroke and was unable to walk and talk. The care provided by the staff and the facility had miraculously seen her bodily functions gradually return to normal. Now she is able to walk and talk. It is really astonishing to witness the remarkable progress she has made. It amazes me to see her moving around the facility and helping staff and other residents at card games. It is always a joy to visit her and in particular, seeing her making constant progress. I guess her positive attitude to life makes a big difference.

The Elderly - a priceless treasure and inspiration

It is a real privilege to be able to visit those aged care home residents and establish friendships with them. Each one was unique, each came from a different background and had their own stories to tell. Some had gone through the wars and extreme hardship. Yet their resilience and strength to move on inspire me that life is worth living. I learnt from them that through trials, we fight on and do not be discouraged and disappointed. Even in their old age, when some of them are bedridden or wheelchair bound, they still try their best to make the most of what they can do and soldier on. Most of

them do not speak English, yet they tried hard to express themselves through gestures and other means. They kept learning and never gave up. I have a lot of fond memories with them which added so much to my life, not to mention the knowledge, life experience and wisdom I learnt.

I myself worked as a volunteer coordinator. I organised volunteers to visit people living at homes who are vulnerable and at risk of isolation. I used to tell my volunteers how much difference they have made to those people's lives.

Now, being a volunteer myself, I find that not only do I make a difference in the lives of the people I visit, it makes a tremendous difference in my life as well. My life has been enriched. I gain more than I give.

The Community Visitors Scheme not only breaks the isolation and gives hope to those living in a place where they do not speak the language, it helps the residents connect to the world outside and realise that they are still loved and cared for through the visits of volunteers.

The visits over the years helped me realize that our elderly are people who simply crave to be seen and treated as repositories of valuable knowledge and experience that would be beneficial to those who reach out for it. They want to feel valued and relevant.



Boosting Your Immunity

With the outbreak of COVID-19 in the community, and the flu season already upon us, many of us are keen to do all we can to remain healthy. That's where our immune system comes in.

The immune system is our body's first line of defence against illnesses and it's made up of a complex network of cells, tissues and organs found in a variety of locations including your skin, spleen, lymphatic system and, most significantly, your intestines.

“About 70 per cent of the immune function is located in the gut,” explains David Heber, MD, PhD, professor emeritus of medicine at UCLA Health. “Immune function needs certain nutrients to work well and it needs a healthy gut microbiome because the microbiome is intimately connected to immune function.”

What is the gut microbiome?

Microbiome is a collection of around 100 trillion micro-organisms such as bacteria, fungi and viruses living in the gut, which is 10 times the number of human cells. It has such widespread effects on the body, ranging from cognitive function, behaviour, mood, level of concentration, memory, appetite, weight, metabolism, immunity and digestive health.

Researchers have found that genome of the bacteria in our gut (the gut microbiome) – is 150 times larger than that of humans, meaning our bacteria carry more genes than our human cells. The question is – how do our human cells interact with these microbes?

How do our human cells interact with gut microbiome?

Over time, the body has evolved with bacteria in a symbiotic relationship. Human cells and bacteria live in close proximities and have a mutually advantageous relationship – to ensure that the body is protected and is eliminating any harmful pathogens that it comes into contact with.

The interaction between the two begins at birth, which is the moment the body encounters bacteria for the first time – as the birth canal contains large numbers of bacteria. In time, the immune system

forms the diversity of the microbiome and the gut influences the strength and development of the immune system. Throughout life, other factors also shape the composition of the gut flora, i.e. diet, environment, lifestyle habits.



The gut and the immune system support one another to promote a healthy body. For instance, the gut microbiome acts as a gatekeeper and a trainer. It teaches immune cells called T-cells to distinguish foreign entities from our own tissue. When antibodies cannot access certain pathogens that have managed to attack our cells, T-cells mediate the situation and destroy infected cells – this process is referred to as cell-mediated immunity.

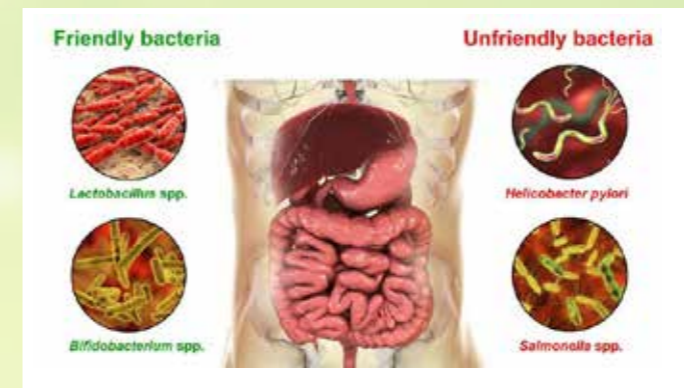
“The microbiome and the immune system are critically intertwined,” says Jonathan Jacobs, MD, PhD, a professor of digestive diseases at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. “What’s present in the gut determines what education immune cells get.”

When everything is running smoothly, the gut sends signals for the development of healthy immune function modulating immune responses. In exchange, the immune system helps to populate the microbiome with health-promoting microbes. When these two are in good relations, the body is equipped to respond to pathogens and to tolerate harmless bacteria, preventing an autoimmune response and ensuring overall well-being.

It has been well established that the abnormalities in the communication between intestinal bacteria and the immune cells can contribute to disease.

Because the immune system is intricately related to the gut microbiota, if the body is exposed to bacteria-stripping factors such as poor diet, illness, prolonged use of antibiotics, surgeries, heavy metals, chemotherapy etc., this lowers the intestinal flora, which can snowball into reduced immunity, making the body more susceptible to disease.

The intestinal lining of the gut is delicate. When it is weakened, one is more vulnerable in the face of new harmful invaders. And when the gut is out of balance, meaning not enough good friendly bacteria vs. the pathogenic, your whole body is affected. Luckily, the same way bad guys can overpopulate the gut, good guys can too.



How to maintain healthy gut microbiome

Limiting stress and **not smoking** are two ways to keep your gut microbiome healthy, and **making good food choices** is another way to keep it in tip-top shape.

Diversity of fibre

The best way to feed your microbiome is to eat a diet rich in fibre, which is a type of carbohydrate that doesn't get broken down like most other foods we eat. Instead some fibers travel to the gut where they are fermented, and the by-products of that process communicate with our immune system, Joanna explains.

The most important thing is a diversity of different fibres. Just taking fibre supplements is not the same as eating a plant-rich diet, which gives you lots of different types of fibres. So include wholegrains (not refined grains) legumes such as

beans, lentils and chickpeas. Include fruits and vegetables, and don't forget nuts and seeds. So those are the key plant food groups to really think about.”

One key type of fibre is a prebiotic, which passes through the gastrointestinal tract undigested, where it stimulates the growth of good bacteria in the large intestine. Food sources of prebiotics include beetroot, asparagus, chickpeas, red kidney beans, nectarines, watermelon, dried dates, cashews, pasta, oats and wheat bread.

You need to be careful not to overdo it, however, as an excess of prebiotic fiber can cause gas and bloating. And if you're increasing your fiber intake, you need to drink plenty of water – something fiber needs to work.

Probiotic foods

Eating probiotic foods is also a good idea to support your gut health. Probiotics are a group of live microorganisms that help harmonise the balance of good and bad bacteria in the gut. They secrete protective substances that help activate the immune system and block pathogens from creating major disease. Probiotics are found in miso, kimchi, yoghurt, kefir (a dairy drink) and pickled vegetables such as pickles or sauerkraut.

Polyphenols

Another key food component of a gut-healthy diet is foods high in polyphenols - chemical compounds with antioxidant properties. Sources of polyphenols include tea, coffee, cocoa, red wine, berries, pomegranates, leafy greens, herbs and spices.

Gut-health foes

Of course, not all foods are good for your gut – some are actually detrimental to intestinal function. That includes foods high in artificial sweeteners (such as soft drinks), emulsifiers (found in processed foods such as ice-cream), excessive amounts of meat and (for some people) dairy.

<https://gilbertlab.com/immune-system/gut-microbiome>

Lifelong Learning

Humans have a natural drive to explore, learn and grow, and improve our own quality of life and sense of self-worth. We all have natural abilities, some of which we have never had the chance to develop; but it is never too late!

Learning opportunities can help us find more joy and fulfilment from daily life. Not all of our learning comes from a classroom. These are examples of the everyday lifelong learning we engage in on a daily basis, either through socialization, trial and error, or selfinitiated study. We learn for ourselves, not for someone else.

Benefits of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning opportunities inspire and stimulate while helping to stave off feelings of loneliness by providing opportunities for social engagement, an important factor influencing well-being.

Research indicates that learning new skills can provide many benefits including:

- **Increases brain health, thus Improves cognition & memory**
While it can't cure Alzheimer's, lifelong learning can certainly help improve your brain plasticity and even delay symptoms of Alzheimer's.
- **Improves mental health**
A study conducted by cognitive neuropsychologists at the University of Sussex in England found that reading for as little as six minutes can lower your stress levels.
- **Lengthens life span**
For seniors, in particular, lower stress can mean better cardiovascular health, a boosted immune system, lower blood pressure, a lower risk for stroke or heart attack, and decreased levels of depression, to name a few.
- **Boosts confidence and self-esteem**
- **Renews self-motivation**
- **Reduces dependence on others**

- Alters mood and behaviour positively
- Improves dexterity
- Provides an opportunity for positive engagement with the community

Learning Activity Ideas

Educational travel, cooking or baking, politics, religion, the sky is the limit!

- Educational Travel
- Nutrition
- Religious / Spiritual Education
- Gardening, Watercolor painting
- Music Appreciation
- How to use a Laptop / Iphone
- Playing the piano, or an instrument
- Learning a language
- Calligraphy



Quotes from famous people

Mahatma Gandhi said,

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow.

Learn as if you were to live forever"

Albert Einstein said,

"Once you stop learning, you start dying"

Henry Ford said,

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at 20 or 80.

Anyone who keeps learning stays young."



WHO ARE OUR VISITORS ?

(June 2022 Statistics)

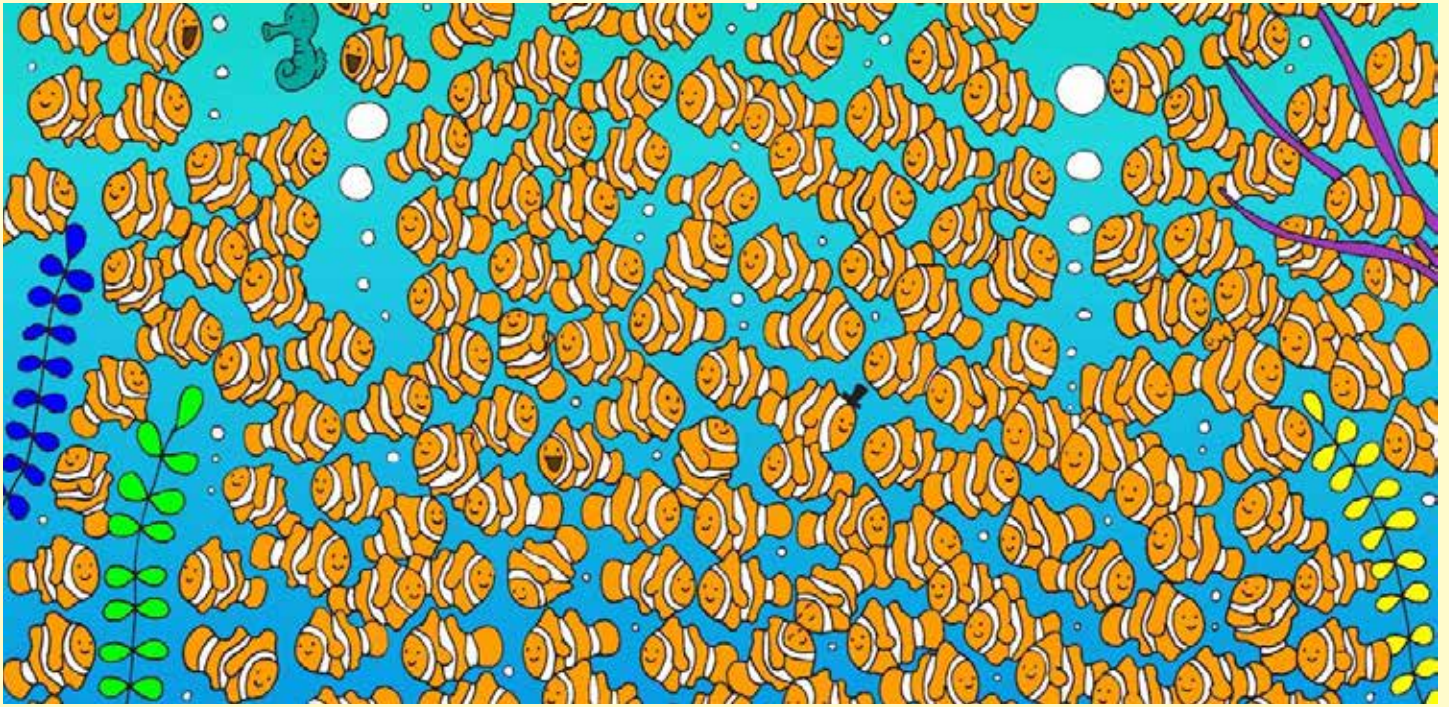
Language Groups	No. of Active Visitors	No. of Residents being visited	Language Groups	No. of Active Visitors	No. of Residents being visited
Arabic	5	6	Khmer	1	1
Assyrian	1	1	Korean	1	1
Chinese - Cantonese	61	91	Latvian	1	1
Chinese - Mandarin	20	24	Macedonian	1	3
Chinese - Shanghai	2	3	Polish	1	2
Chinese - Teo-Chow	4	4	Russian	2	2
Croatian	3	3	Serbian	1	1
Czech	1	1	Spanish	2	2
English	3	3	Swedish	1	1
French	5	7	Tagalog	2	4
German	5	5	Tamil	8	12
Hindi	2	2	Ukrainian	2	2
Japanese	1	2	Vietnamese	6	14



Do you have any friends who can visit some of these lonely residents?

Language	No	Locality	Language	No	Locality
Arabic	1	Bankstown	Korean	2	Lewisham, Strathfield
Croatian	2	Blacktown, Lewisham	Romanian	1	Surry Hills
Finnish	1	Petersham	Serbian	2	Ashfield, Gladesville
French	1	Marsfield	Spanish	4	Dural, Lewisham, Kings Langley
German	4	Blacktown, Chatswood, Marsfield	Tagalog	1	Bankstown
Hindi	1	Summer Hill	Turkish	2	Auburn, Berala

Brain Teasers



There is a goldfish hiding among clownfish somewhere in this coral reef. Can you find it?

QUESTIONS

- 1 What has to be broken before you can use it?
- 2 I'm tall when I'm young, and I'm short when I'm old. What am I?
- 3 What month of the year has 28 days?
- 4 What is always in front of you but can't be seen?
- 5 What goes up but never comes down?
- 6 A man who was outside in the rain without an umbrella or hat didn't get a single hair on his head wet. Why?
- 7 What building has the most stories?
- 8 What tastes better than it smells?
- 9 I am an odd number. Take away a letter and I become even. What number am I?
- 10 Mary has four daughters, and each of her daughters has a brother. How many children does Mary have?
- 11 If there are three apples and you take away two, how many apples do you have?
- 12 What 4-letter word can be written forward, backward or upside down, and can still be read from left to right?
- 13 What is so fragile that saying its name breaks it?
- 14 What can run but never walks, has a mouth but never talks, has a head but never weeps, has a bed but never sleeps?
- 15 Speaking of rivers, a man calls his dog from the opposite side of the river. The dog crosses the river without getting wet, and without using a bridge or boat. How?
- 16 What can fill a room but takes up no space?
- 17 If you drop me I'm sure to crack, but give me a smile and I'll always smile back. What am I?
- 18 The more you take, the more you leave behind. What are they?

ANSWERS 1) An egg 2) A candle 3) All of them 4) The future 5) Your age 6) He is bald 7) The library 8) Your tongue 9) Seven 10) Five-each daughter has the same brother. 11) You have two apples. 12) NOON 13) Silence 14) A river 15) The river was frozen 16) Light 17) A mirror 18) Footsteps