

Equity-Centred Innovation for Ageing Populations:

A Mixed-Methods Study of Respectful and Responsive Elderly Care in Singapore

Taufique Joarder, MBBS, MPH, DrPH

Associate Professor and Lead, Programme Evaluation Unit | SingHealth Duke-NUS Global Institute, Duke-NUS Medical School

Prince Mahidol Award Conference 2026 | January 29-31, 2026

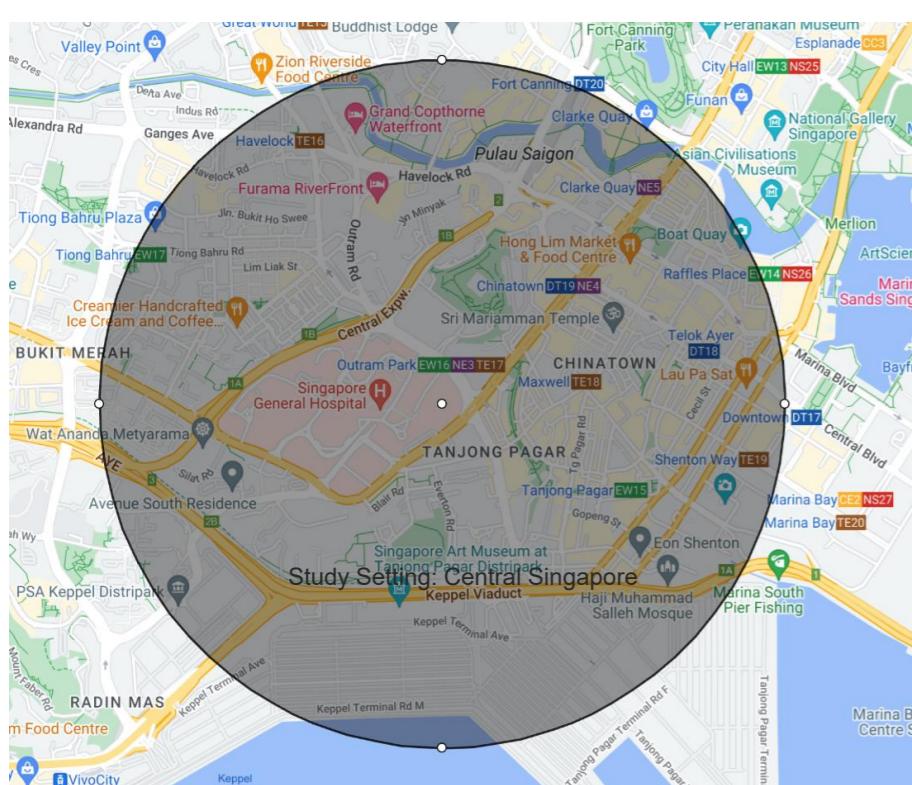
BACKGROUND

- Singapore faces rapid demographic ageing with increased chronic disease burden
- Need for respectful, responsive, and dignified elderly care
- Knowledge gap: Most studies from Western contexts
- Policy priority: Equity-centred innovation in healthcare delivery

METHODS

Design:

Exploratory Sequential Mixed-Methods



Data Collection:

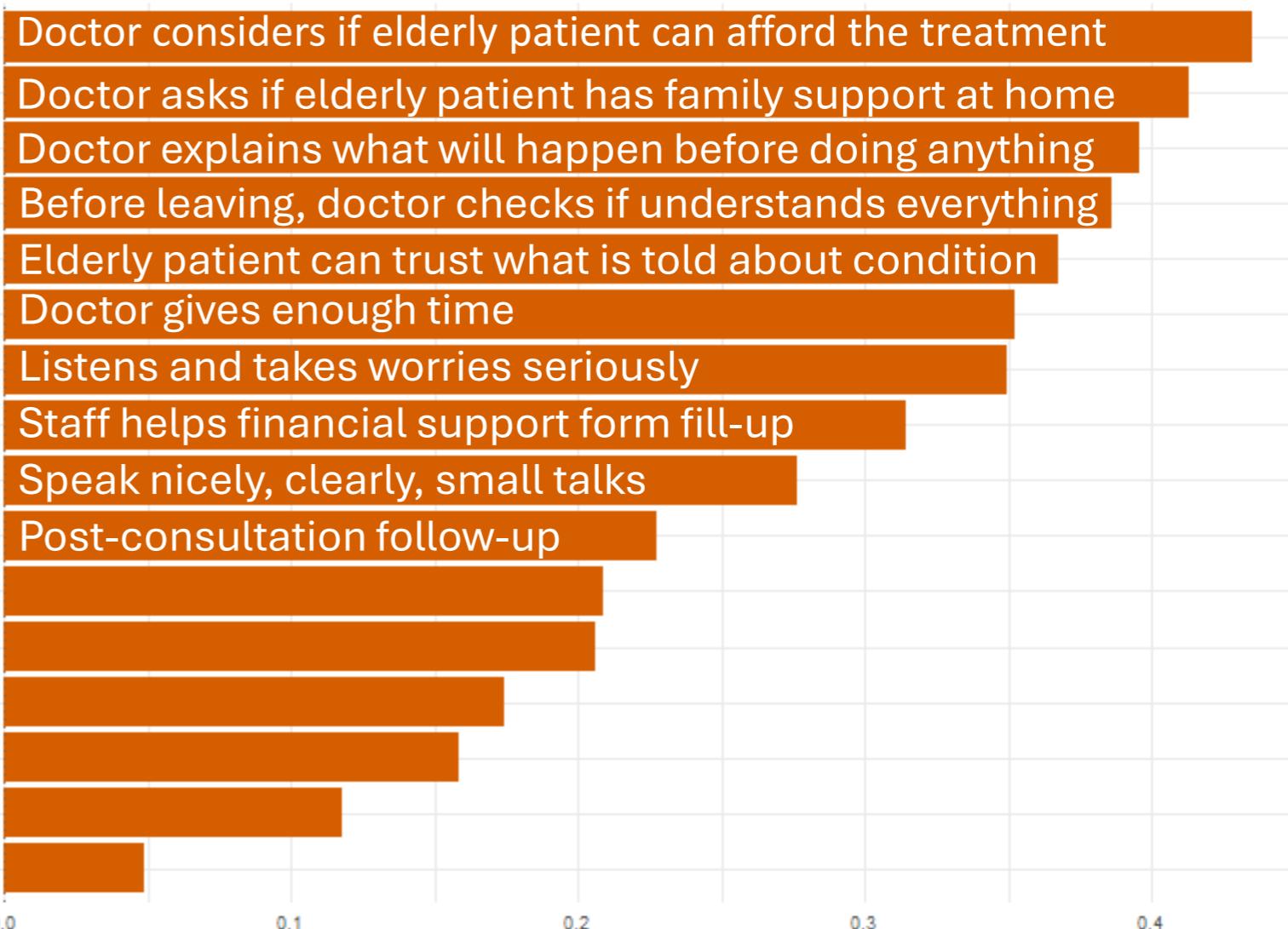
- 21 in-depth interviews
- 10 focus group discussions
- Survey of 264 seniors

Analysis:

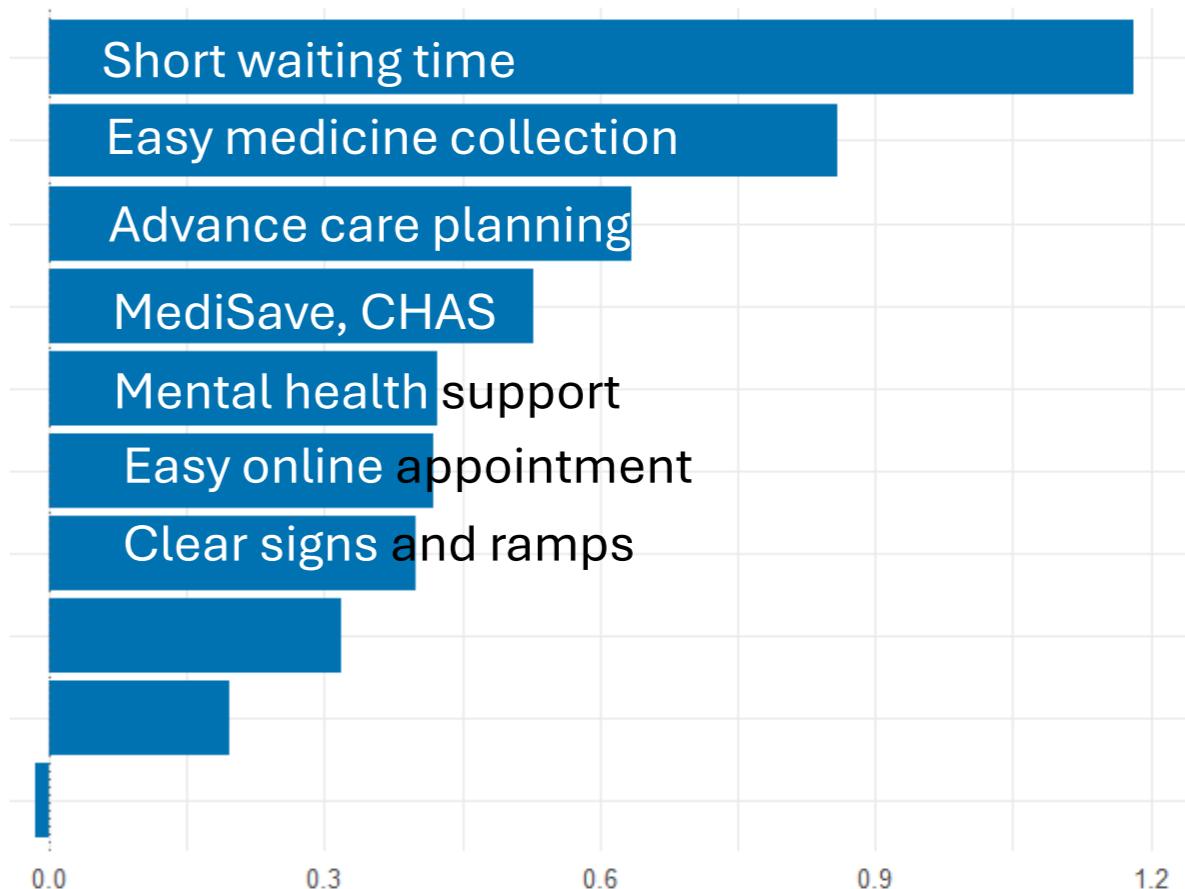
- Qualitative: Thematic analysis (Atlas.ti)
- Quantitative: Psychometric analysis (R)
- Scale validation ($\alpha > 0.9$)

Quantitative Results

Top Respect Gaps (Importance - Satisfaction)



Top Needs Gaps



KEY FINDINGS

Qualitative Themes

DIGNITY

- Language barriers: Non-English speakers face discrimination
- Class disparities: Class C patients report basics unmet
- Disrespectful practices: Inattentive, rushed consultations
- Respectful practices: Patient listening, clear explanations

AUTONOMY

- Seniors want information shared directly
- Prefer involvement in treatment decisions
- Want permission before procedures
- Mixed provider responsiveness

COMMUNICATION

- Prefer gentle speech, reassurance, encouragement
- Challenges: Language barriers, dismissive attitudes
- Need comfort before/after procedures

CONCLUSIONS

- Persistent gaps in communication, autonomy, and individualized care despite positive interpersonal interactions
- Substantial system responsiveness gaps in financial navigation, waiting times, and care coordination
- Vulnerable populations at heightened risk: digitally excluded, socioeconomically disadvantaged, minority-language seniors
- RRDECS offers validated, structured measurement tool for improving elderly care quality
- 'Structural respect' framework: Dignity in care as both interpersonal AND systemic

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Integrate respectful care standards into national elderly care guidelines
- Embed metrics in quality frameworks (Healthier SG)
- Mandate language support services and culturally sensitive practices
- Incentivize time allocation for patient engagement and dignity protocols

CONTACT

Email: taufique@duke-nus.edu.sg

KEYWORDS

- Responsiveness
- Elderly Care
- Equity
- Singapore
- Healthcare Quality

