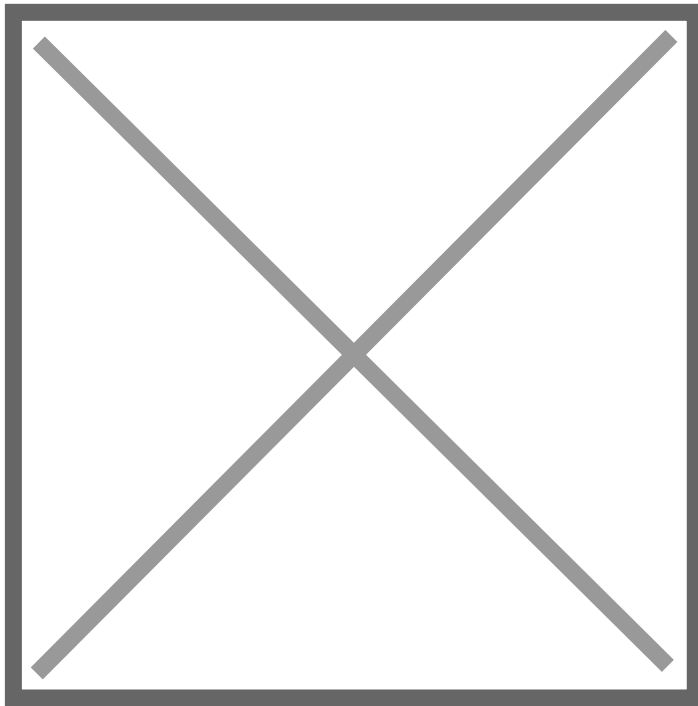


Singapore sparked awareness around early childhood health and developmental concerns

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Centre for Holistic Initiatives for Learning and Development (CHILD) is spearheading advancement in early childhood development while exploring key trends, R&D, collaborations and sharing interventions, policies and practices. Event Coverage by Singapore office. A event by MOH.



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Image Credit: Centre for Holistic Initiatives for Learning and Development (CHILD), Singapore

Singapore's Centre for Holistic Initiatives for Learning and Development (CHILD) center held the inaugural CHILD Biennial Conference from 26 - 28 October 2022 focusing on translating child development research into policy and practice. The forum deep dived into early childhood studies, innovations, and developments in science interventions, in addition to encouraging research community partnerships.

Themed “Emerging Issues and Advances in Early Childhood: Knowledge + Collaboration = Transformation”, the conference brought together policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and global thought leaders in the early childhood space to discuss key trends, developments, and research in early childhood, to explore collaborations and to share interventions and policies to improve the most critical early years of children in Singapore.

The opening ceremony was graced by Guest-of-Honour Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health. Ms Sun Xueling, Minister of State for Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Social and Family Development, and Ms Rahayu Mahzam, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Ministry of Health and Ministry of Law discussed ways to better support women, parents and families in Singapore to bring to life a future their children deserve, at an intimate fireside chat during the conference.

The initiative supports Singapore’s Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) 2025 plans on Human Health and Potential, which aims to realize the full potential of every child through improving prenatal and early childhood development and learning outcomes in schools. Aligned to this, the Centre for Holistic Initiatives for Learning and Development (CHILD), based at the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore (NUS Medicine) was set up last year to lead the way in translating critical research to intervention, to improve the health and developmental outcomes of children in Singapore and beyond.

Building the foundation of healthy eating:

CHILD’s work aims to improve the health and well-being of children through targeted interventions. For instance the “The Appetite Toolbox”, a new program aimed at stimulating healthy eating habits in young children, which may prove to be a useful tool for tackling obesity and eating habits among preschoolers. As a part of a partnership between the A*STAR Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences (SICS), CHILD and PCF Sparkletots, six childcare centers are currently testing tools designed to improve eating self-regulation skills in preschoolers in Singapore.

“Evidence from the GUSTO cohort in Singapore indicates that eating behaviors, such as larger serving sizes, eating faster and eating when not hungry, are associated with increased food intake and the likelihood of developing an unhealthy body weight during the preschool years. Children and adults who are more sensitive to internal hunger and fullness cues are better able to adjust their food intake in response to their needs and are more likely to have a healthy body weight. We have to start building good habits from young in order to set them up for life,” said Dr Keri McCrickerd, Research Scientist at A*STAR’s Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences (SICS) and Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, NUS Medicine and lead Principal Investigator for the Appetite Toolbox.

Realising the potential of every child:

CHILD’s work aligns with the Singapore Government’s Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) 2025 plan Human Health and Potential, which strives to achieve the full potential of every child by improving early childhood development and school learning outcomes.

CHILD, whose founding partners include NUS Medicine, Lien Foundation, Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI), and A*STAR’s SICS was established last year in an effort to translate critical research into action, thereby improving children’s health and development. As part of CHILD’s mission, it also supports and helps women prepare for motherhood, and helps children achieve good health and well-being from an early age.

The Growing Up in Singapore Towards healthy Outcomes (GUSTO) is a landmark study, devoted to examining how maternal mental health and children’s neurodevelopment are affected by conditions during pregnancy and early childhood. This study is a major collaborative effort involving National University Health System, KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital, and A*STAR’s Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences as well as international researchers in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and other countries.

“CHILD was established to maximise the holistic developmental potential of children by reducing the time it takes for research to translate into policy and practice. Children cannot afford to wait more than a decade for research evidence to reach them and we’re closing the gap now. The inaugural CHILD Biennial Conference provided early childhood stakeholders the platform to discuss challenges and solutions” said Professor Adrian Sandler, Executive Director of CHILD at NUS Medicine.

“The period from birth to pre-school are critical windows of opportunity to inculcate habits for a lifetime, optimising human potential early in life. The inaugural CHILD Biennial Conference is an important starting point to gather the best minds in early childhood development, healthcare and education to realise the full potential of every child in Singapore,” said Professor Chong Yap Seng, Dean of NUS Medicine, and Chief Clinical Officer at SICS.