



## ***Designers show persons living with dementia & their carers practical hacks & solutions to live & care better***

*Lien Foundation, Lekker Architects, and Lanzavecchia + Wai Design Studio team up to launch **Hack Care** – a catalogue of DIY hacks to create dementia-friendly homes*

13 September 2020. Singapore

1. Contrary to the common “heck care” euphemism, the *Hack Care* guide is borne out of the desire to show how one can care better for persons with dementia through simple hacks, or improvisations and creative ideas.
2. Styled like an IKEA catalogue with online instruction manuals, the 240-page *Hack Care* presents a visual compendium of more than 50 hacks and tricks, essays and stories to make the home a friendlier place for those living with dementia and to help their caregivers cope with the daily challenges of caregiving. The book takes a can-do, DIY approach to inspire and encourage caregivers to come up with their own hacks that are suited to their homes and personal needs. The aim is to help keep their loved ones with dementia engaged, empowered and enabled to age in place for as long as possible.
3. With its simple creative interventions and design innovations for the home devised by designers and a team with research, professional and personal caregiving insights, the *Hack Care* book mitigates the limited range of readily-available care products for seniors and persons with dementia.
4. *Hack Care* combines the design and research insights of Lekker Architects with the expertise of product and furniture designers from Lanzavecchia + Wai Design Studio. Professionals from Alzheimer’s Disease Association (ADA), Brahm Centre and Khoo Teck Puat Hospital shared their collective wisdom on the caregiving journey.

### ***Using design to meet unique needs of people living with dementia***

5. Launched during World Alzheimer’s Month which falls in September, *Hack Care* is a timely reminder for dementia carers and the public to reflect on how design can impact living and built environments to improve the care and wellbeing of persons with dementia. In addition, this year’s World Alzheimer

Report on 'Design, dignity and dementia', to be released on 21 September, will examine dementia-related design and the built environment globally, the progress to-date, as well as current best practices and innovations.

6. "Living with dementia is daunting and our everyday home environments do not always anticipate or meet the unique needs of people battling cognitive and physical frailty. These challenges can be mitigated with good design that is functional, inspirational and accessible, and shaped by the shared experiences of caregivers who have been on a similar journey," said Mr Lee Poh Wah, CEO, Lien Foundation.
7. He added that through the book's caregiving insights and practical tips, the Foundation hopes to contribute to the resources of the local as well as international dementia community, just as it had done with a collection of 50 real-life caregivers' videos released in 2019. Such efforts are part of the philanthropic house's approach to using and embedding design in its work to create value, shape behaviours and tackle problems with fresh solutions.
8. *Hack Care* encourages caregivers to use the book's ideas as a starting point to 'hack' or adopt fresh perspectives about caregiving and providing person-centred care. With their understanding of the nuanced needs of their loved ones, caregivers are best placed to 'hack' the living environment and adapt it to the specific requirements to enable their loved ones to be independent, empowered and connected while remaining safe and comfortable.

***Personal experience, caregivers sharing hacks***

9. When Lekker Architects' Director, Ms Ong Ker-Shing was asked by Lien Foundation to collaborate on this design project, she jumped at the chance right away. Her father's fight with dementia since 2009 and her own journey as a caregiver had impacted her deeply. She said, "At home, we observed how my father—through his decline into dementia—was incredibly responsive to changes in his environment, and more importantly, that the manipulation of this environment was really in the hands of us, his family, and not so much in the hands of architects and designers." She realised that many caregivers like herself were constantly hacking, either through ideas of their own, or in consultation with others.
10. Ms Ong added, "We decided to create a compendium of hack ideas, essays and provocations that would give people insight into dementia and how the environment can play an enormous role in caregiving. The goal was to help non-designers think like designers, to think like hackers, to make tweaks to the

environment in order to make a dementia-friendly home. And for *Hack Care* to ignite their creativity and flexibility in adjusting the physical environment to improve the way they care. ”

### ***Designed for real-world application***

11. While *Hack Care* is an independent initiative, the team behind the book chose to use IKEA products for their accessibility and ease of use. They took a playful leaf from the IKEA catalogue and drew inspiration from the spirit behind the Swedish furniture giant’s collaboration with Queen Silvia of Sweden and a construction firm to produce “Silviabo”, a range of low-cost dementia- and disability-friendly modular housing for seniors in Sweden.
12. Although it is modelled after the IKEA catalogue for its familiarity and universal appeal, *Hack Care* is not confined to IKEA products. Instead, it presents a whole range of possibilities for caregivers that correspond to their different scales of ambition and the wide-ranging needs of persons with dementia – from larger-scale hacks like improvising the IKEA Poang chair (pages 10-33) to simple ones like camouflaging an exit door in a colour similar to its adjacent walls (page 179).
13. In addition, *Hack Care* shows how the ‘micro-worlds’ or spaces in the homes for spending the day and mealtimes can be enhanced, and daily rituals like bathing and dressing can become opportunities to shape the living environment to improve the wellbeing of the person with dementia. For example, a shelf could be turned into a carer’s corner that organises the loved one’s care needs and items like towels, hand lotions, medication and administrative papers (using IKEA’s ALGOT scaffold, pages 38-53). Two hangers could be arranged in sequence to separate and pre-arrange a care recipient’s outfit according to the sequence of dressing (page 157).

### ***10 guiding principles for a dementia-enabling environment***

14. The *Hack Care* initiative took reference from the evidence-based Dementia Enabling Environment Principles developed by Professor Richard Fleming and Kirsty Bennett from the University of Wollongong<sup>1</sup>. The designers took it a step further by offering solutions and principles that were practicable and aimed to spark creative ways of thinking around the challenges of making the environment more dementia-friendly.
15. The book also features the collective wisdom of professional caregivers who have journeyed with persons living with dementia – from a psychologist and a geriatrician to a community dementia care

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.enablingenvironments.com.au/dementia-enabling-environment-principles.html>

expert. With their inputs, the team did a deep dive to understand the kinds of challenges having dementia would pose. They then came up with tips and suggestions that covered key activities from mealtimes to daily rituals, and gave new ideas for adapting furniture arrangements to suit care needs, as well as suggestions on how the visual environment or stimuli can influence wellbeing. For instance, *Hack Care* offers tips on the use of colours and lights to shape behaviour. Eating from blue-coloured plates increases food intake (page 176), while drinking from a red cup encourages water consumption (page 143).

16. Through their work on the book that stretched over three years, the *Hack Care* team drew on their design and research expertise as well as personal caregiving experience to outline 10 key care principles to empower persons with dementia and their caregivers (see Annex or page 6-7 in *Hack Care*). On the potential of such efforts, Mr Lee said, “Design holds great promise to solve the most pressing challenges of our time. We hope to engender a new breed of designers as catalysts for change in our ecosystem of partners and projects.”

#### ***Pandemic opportunity to hack***

17. The fresh possibilities shown by the designers in *Hack Care* could inspire new ways to care and solve problems. As more people are spending greater time at home, whether working or keeping safe due to COVID-19, there are more opportunities for such exploration. The pandemic has also disrupted routines and introduced new stresses to persons with dementia and their caregivers. However, *Hack Care* offers a chance for families to make the most of their stay-home time by putting their heads, hearts and hands together to come up with some simple household hacks to improve the wellbeing of their loved one. For a start, they can download a copy of *Hack Care* from <http://hackcare.sg>  
[#HackCareSG](#)

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#### **About Lien Foundation**

**[www.lienfoundation.org](http://www.lienfoundation.org)**

The Lien Foundation is a Singapore-based philanthropic house guided by a ‘radical’ approach to tackle problems at its roots. We view innovation as a permanent state of exploration, and embed design into our work in early childhood development, eldercare and end-of-life issues, as a key driver of value creation. Social problems are often tethered to society’s long-held assumptions, old practices and ingrained beliefs. It is this reason we turn to design to recast our thinking, to orientate towards shaping new experiences and behaviour, as well as focus on fresh approaches and solutions.

*Hack Care* is the latest addition to Lien Foundation's catalogue of design publications which includes *Hospitable Hospice*, a handbook of universal concepts and design principles for future hospices; *A Different Class*, a showcase of 10 typologies of preschool spaces; and *Second Beginnings*, which presents 10 new architectural concepts of community spaces for seniors.

To push the envelope using design, the Foundation partnered top designers and created an award-winning living lab classroom for pre-schoolers, Singapore's first purpose-built inclusive preschool and play spaces that were 'hacked' and built by young children with existing and recyclable materials.

In other design-related eldercare projects, the Foundation conceived the first global Design for Death competition to reimagine deathcare for the future. It also championed the physical and care design of the eldercare facility, Jade Circle, to promote the autonomy, choices, privacy and dignity of persons with dementia.

## Hack Care Factsheet

### A Dementia in Singapore

	Number of Persons
<b>Resident Population (June 2019)</b>	4,026,209 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Estimated Prevalence of Dementia (June 2019)</b>	86,050 <sup>2</sup>

### B About Hack Care

<b>What</b>	<p><i>Hack Care</i> aims to empower and inspire persons with dementia and their caregivers with creative and practical ways to improvise and improve their living environment to live and care better.</p> <p>The result is a visual catalogue, <i>Hack Care</i>, that showcases more than 240 pages of ideas – practical hacks, simple tips and tricks – to simplify life and help caregivers cope with the daily challenges of caregiving.</p> <p>Styled like an IKEA catalogue with online instruction manuals, <i>Hack Care</i> takes a can-do, DIY approach to encourage caregivers to come up with their own hacks that are suited to their own needs so that their loved ones with dementia can remain engaged, empowered and enabled to age in place for as long as possible.</p>
<b>Who</b> Commissioned by  <u>Partners</u>  Designers & Authors	<p><b>Lien Foundation</b> - a Singapore-based philanthropic organisation that seeks to inspire social change and improve the lives of seniors, children with special needs and those who are born into low-income homes.</p> <p><b>Lekker Architects</b> - a research and design agency that explores how built environments can make people feel and experience.</p> <p>Lien Foundation and Lekker have collaborated on five projects to date –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Caterpillar's Cove - the President's Design Award-winning preschool</li> <li>2. A Different Class: Preschool Spaces Redefined – a book showcasing new typologies of preschools</li> <li>3. Kindle Garden - Singapore's first inclusive preschool</li> <li>4. <i>Hack Care</i></li> <li>5. Designing a new living environment for end-of-life care</li> </ol>

<sup>1</sup> Population Trends 2019, Singapore Department of Statistics

<sup>2</sup> According to the Well-Being of the Singapore Elderly (Wise) 2013 study led by the Institute of Mental Health, 1 in 10 Singaporeans aged 60 years old and above have dementia, and according to the Population Trends 2019 report by the Department of Statistics, there are 860,508 Singapore residents aged above 60 years as of June 2019.

<b>Designers</b>	<b>Lanzavecchia + Wai Design Studio</b> - an industrial design consultancy studio specialising in furniture and industrial design.
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hackcare.sg">www.hackcare.sg</a>  #HackCareSG
<b>Watch the Hacks</b>	Livestream on Lien Foundation's Facebook page  21 Sep and 28 Sep 2020 at 7pm Demo of hacking ideas from <i>Hack Care</i>  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/JourneywithGeorge/">https://www.facebook.com/JourneywithGeorge/</a>
<b>How to get the book <i>Hack Care</i></b>	Request via the <i>Hack Care</i> website - 500 copies are available to the public for free.  - A complimentary soft copy can also be downloaded from the website.  Copies of the book will also be distributed to Lien Foundation's and Lekker's network of partners, including eldercare service providers and members of the design community.
<b>Principles guiding the hacks in <i>Hack Care</i></b>	<p><i>Hack Care</i> referenced the widely-cited 10 Dementia Enabling Environment Principles<sup>3</sup> developed by Professor Richard Fleming and Kirsty Bennett of the University of Wollongong. These 10 Principles were constructed by reviewing studies that looked at maximising enablement and wellbeing for people with dementia through physical design.</p> <p>By applying and translating the above principles into practical concepts for daily living, the <i>Hack Care</i> team came up with 10 of their own guiding principles to empower persons with dementia and their caregivers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Let persons with dementia play an active role.</li> <li>2. Encourage decision-making.</li> <li>3. Affirm their sense of self.</li> <li>4. Have simple conveniences within easy reach.</li> <li>5. Familiarity is comforting.</li> <li>6. Don't forget the simple pleasures.</li> <li>7. Simplify the environment.</li> <li>8. Do things together.</li> <li>9. Stay flexible and adaptable.</li> <li>10. The caregiver matters.</li> </ol>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.enablingsenvironments.com.au/dementia-enabling-environment-principles.html>

### C. A glimpse inside *Hack Care*



One of the key themes in *Hack Care* is encouraging caregivers to take time to care for themselves. As an educational resource for dementia caregivers and the public, the book aims to better equip the caregiver community to cope with the challenges of caregiving, as well as improve the public's understanding of the condition.



This compendium of ideas is organised into the micro-worlds within a home, like spaces for spending the day and having meals, and the daily rituals of life. In each category, it is first explained how the environment plays a role in that aspect of life, ways in which that environment could be adjusted, and ideas for items that could be used to create that environment.







The book also features the collective wisdom and insights of caregivers who have journeyed with persons living with dementia.



- **Ong Ker-Shing of Lekker Architects**, who is also author of the *Hack Care* book, is a caregiver to her father with dementia. Ker-Shing reminds caregivers to be kind to themselves and points out that hacking is about making small tweaks to things that already exist and are already being used, to suit a new need.



- **Ruth Wong, Programme Lead, Alzheimer's Disease Association**, shares about some misconceptions of caregiving, and how caregivers can avoid actions that may reinforce the disabilities of their loved ones and restore their dignity by letting their care recipients accomplish things on their own.



- **Dr Wong Chek Hooi, Senior Consultant, Geriatric Medicine, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, and Deputy Executive Director of Geriatric Education and Medicine Institute** enlightens caregivers about how the design of the physical environment helps persons with dementia cope with everyday living.



- **Eric Lim, a psychologist with Brahm Centre**, highlights the importance of mindfulness and self-care for caregivers. He reminds them to be present and savour the moments with their care recipients, and to remember that the behavioural challenges of their care recipients are a consequence of the illness. Eric was a caregiver to his late father who had dementia.