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# A Portable Software for Tracking and Monitoring Daily Lifestyle Habits - On-going Research in Schools

Quek Jin Jong, Chia Tet Fatt, Michael Chia, JohnWang and JoyceMok

Five professors at the **National** Institute of Education (NIE) have **designed** a world's first - a portable software that is able to give users instant health assessments and appropriate advice everywhere they go. The five professors are **Drs. Quek Jin Jong, Chia Tet Fatt, Michael Chia, JohnWang and Joyce Mok.**

"HITS (**HealthTrek Information Tracking System**) is an **intelligent** health-building gadget of tomorrow that is **available** today," said Michael Chia, from the Physical Education and Sports Science Academic Group. "It is a smart software because personal choices are **recognised** and appropriate personal recommendations are given on demand **and** in real time". HITS was officially launched to schools on the **2<sup>nd</sup>** of May 2002.

Users can record what they eat, their physical activities, and moods for up to a week. **They can** then get their health reports

and recommendations from **the** records they entered into the PDA. The system can also calculate the number of days needed to **lose/gain** weight that is **physiologically** sound and healthy.

"There is a safe weight **loss/weight** gain schedule that is realistic, and importantly based on positive behaviour change in **terms** of food and physical activity consumption," said Michael Chia. "By tuning in to your needs, HITS facilitates **lifestyle** change, taking into account how you feel, what you eat and **what** forms of physical activity you do."

HITS is housed in a 16MB personal digital assistant (**PDA**) and is designed to monitor **status** of **body weight, food** intake, physical activity patterns and mood for over a period of one week. Based on the information provided HITS can provide remediation suggestions that are **cognisant** of those promoted by the Health Promotion Board of Singapore.

The genesis for the project was a book and CD-ROM project funded by NIE titled Healthy, Well and Wise, authored by Michael Chia, Leong Lai Keun and Quek **Jin Jong**, where health **wisdoms** are put across in terms that empower young people to take personal responsibility in daily effort (PRIDE) **for** their health and well-being.

HITS was developed in partnership with IBM Singapore and subsidiary International Application Solutions Pte. Ltd. (IAS), an cost \$250 000.

The software was pilot tested in two primary schools -Anglo-Chinese Junior School and Singapore Chinese **Girl School**. According to a survey report prepared by John Wang and Michael Chia, 78.5% of the children felt that the PDA is very **helpful** in promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Feature highlights of HITS include: an age and gender-specific weight **gain/loss** calculator, a food database that has more than 2000 local and non-local food items, a physical activity database that has more than 800 **activity** types, and a mood gauge **that** allows the tracking of one's feelings over time.

The inventors of **HITS** continue to "stir the creative broth that they are **cooking**". They are working on integrating heart rate and blood pressure monitoring into HITS. There are plans to **make HITS** available to all Singaporeans and also to export HITS to other countries.

Gimmicky health clubs and slimming centres will never be the same again with HITS!