

# THE STRAITS TIMES



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## 4 students in gruelling race to help mentally ill



Mr Hwang (from left), Mr Eu, Mr See and Mr Tan plan to cover 250km in the Namib Desert in southern Africa over seven days, braving temperatures of 0 deg C to 35 deg C. ST PHOTO: ALICIA CHAN

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When four students decided they were going to run 250km in the desert to raise funds for the mentally ill, their families thought that the idea was absurd.

Their plan is to cover the distance in the Namib Desert in southern Africa over seven days, braving temperatures of 0 deg C to 35 deg C to raise \$50,000 for the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH).

The group - called Mental Muscle - consists of Mr Jon Tan, Mr Jonathan See, Mr Nicholas Eu and Mr Stephen Hwang, all aged 22. They will take part in the Sahara Race 2016, which will be held in the Namib Desert instead of the Sahara Desert due to civil unrest in the region.

The undergraduates from the National University of Singapore (NUS) Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine have roped in NUS alumnus and SEA Games gold medallist Mok Ying Ren to help them with their training.

They decided to support the mental health cause after a posting at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and other hospitals last year.

Mr See told The Straits Times: "Mental muscle is what we need to complete the race, and what we saw in the patients during our postings. They displayed a lot of resilience in fighting the disease."

Mr Hwang added: "When someone is diagnosed with a mental illness, his family tends to shun him. But if someone gets a heart attack, usually his whole family would come around to support him."

The stigmatising mindset often prevents people from coming forward to get treatment when they need it, he noted.

The race takes place in May, but Mental Muscle hopes donations will come in early, as those made by March 31 will be matched dollar for dollar by the Government under the Care and Share movement.

•For more information, go to [www.mentalmuscle.org](http://www.mentalmuscle.org)

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