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Address sexuality issue for those with mental disabilities, disorders

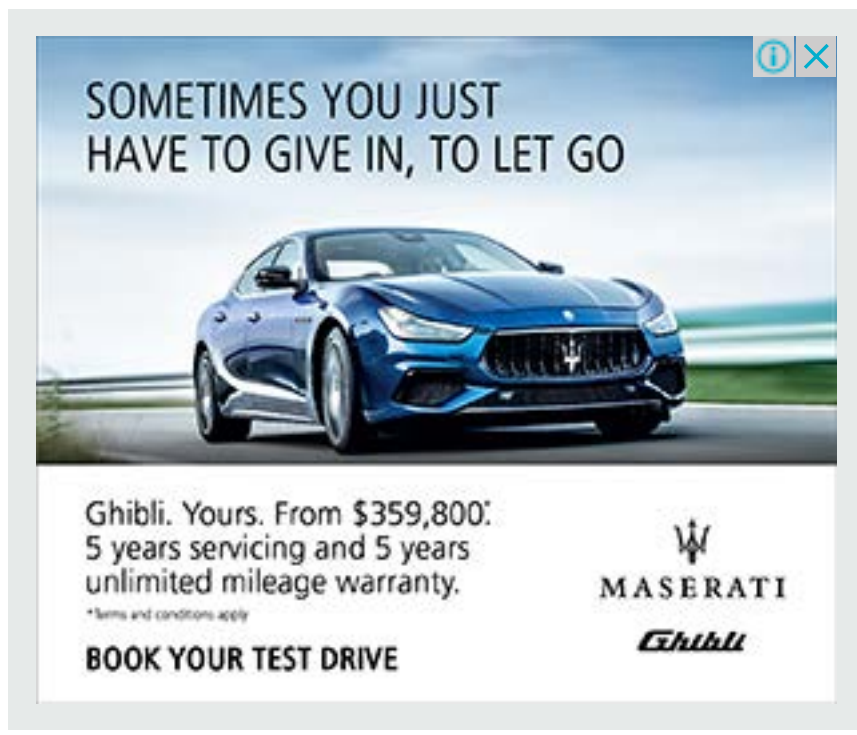
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Dr Chong Siow Ann's commentary ([Disability and sexuality](#); June 30) is a timely and important reminder that helping people with mental disabilities and mental disorders goes beyond addressing their physical needs for food and shelter.

Each of them, just like many of us, also has desires for physical and relationship intimacy.

Mental health support programmes in Singapore for people with mental retardation and chronic mental disorders have mostly focused on socio-occupational rehabilitation, enhancement of coping skills and treatment of the disorders. While these efforts are commendable, more can be done.



With our ageing population, the number of people with chronic mental disorders such as depression and dementia will increase.

Certain types of sexual offences by people with mental retardation and chronic mental disorders have psychological factors that cause impairment to their mood, impulse control and behavioural functions. More often than not, the occurrences of these cases are opportunistic and the victims are those more vulnerable, such as children.

The physiological sexual drives and desire for romantic intimacy for those with mental disabilities and disorders is an area that requires more thought, both at the government and community level.

This will not only help the individual's well-being, but also safeguard the functioning of society as well as safety.

Adopting a more humanistic and holistic approach to caring for people with mental issues will take us one step closer to creating a caring and practical community support network.

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