

Transforming PRIMARY & CARE

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THE PURSUIT OF PASSION
A FAMILY MEDICINE RESIDENT
ON FINDING HER CALLING

IN AND AROUND
NGEMR GOES LIVE,
COMMUNITY VACCINATION
DIALOGUES AND MORE



FAMILY MEDICINE RESIDENCY

SHAPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

The National Healthcare Group Polyclinics provides aspiring
Family Physicians with the right environment to learn and grow



The Future of Family Medicine

As Singapore entered Phase 2 (Heightened Alert), with additional measures and restrictions put in place after the emergence of several clusters of infections, the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) reached a significant milestone with the successful implementation of the Next Generation Electronic Medical Record (NGEMR) system across all its clinics. Geylang Polyclinic was the first NHG Polyclinic to implement the system on 27 February 2021, and less than three months later, on 3 May, NGEMR was implemented at all other NHG Polyclinics. This digital transformation gives NHGP access to a seamless, patient-centric medical records system, and allows for more detailed, systematic care for all patients. Read more about NHGP's NGEMR journey, which began as early as July 2018, in *In And Around*.

While the implementation of NGEMR forms part of NHGP's continuous efforts to strengthen its infrastructure and systems, NHGP also places a strong emphasis on continuously training the next generation of Family Physicians. Find out more in our cover story, 'Is Family Medicine Your Next Path?' which details how NHGP helps develop a team of future-ready Family Physicians to support the country's healthcare system and to provide the best patient-centred care. In *Up Close With*, Family Medicine Resident Dr Teo Ling Li shares her journey to becoming a Family Physician, and her residency experience at Yishun Polyclinic. Also, find out more about our Family Medicine Residency Programme at the virtual NHG Family Medicine Open House on 16-17 July 2021.

Training the next generation of healthcare professionals to take on critical frontline roles such as managing a pandemic is definitely important. Just as important, is for everyone to do their part to safeguard the health and well-being of all around us. The recent emergence of new COVID-19 variants serves as a reminder that the virus continues to be a clear and present danger to us all. Therefore, every single person has a role to play in the fight against the pandemic, such as getting immunised and practicing good hand hygiene habits. In addition, it is important to maintain your overall health. To find out more about how good nutrition can boost your immunity levels, sign up for our webinar in September titled 'Eating Well to Improve Your Immunity'. More details of the webinar can be found on Page 8. In our continuous endeavour to keep COVID-19 at bay, every effort and every person counts. So let us press on, and stay vigilant, healthy and safe!

The Editorial Team

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CONTENTS

3 IS FAMILY MEDICINE YOUR NEXT PATH?

Find out more about NHG's Family Medicine Residency Programme

5 UP CLOSE WITH

A passion for helping people and how this led to a career in Family Medicine

6 IN AND AROUND

NGEMR goes live
COVID-19 vaccination dialogues and more

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IS FAMILY MEDICINE YOUR NEXT PATH?



In this issue, we shine the light on the National Healthcare Group's (NHG) Family Medicine Residency Programme and what it takes to be a Family Physician.

The practice of family medicine in Singapore first began with doctors and nurses who provided basic maternity and child health services for the population. Since then, it has evolved into a discipline that provides care in the context of the person, the family and the community they live in. As doctors who provide primary care, Family Physicians not only serve as the first touchpoint for the medical needs of patients from all walks of life, but also as guides within the country's complex healthcare system.

FAMILY MEDICINE TRAINING: THEN & NOW

"At the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP), we believe in advancing family medicine through the provision of excellent training in all elements of postgraduate medical education," said Dr Jason Chan, Family

Physician, Associate Consultant and Programme Director of the NHG Family Medicine (FM) Residency Programme. Guided by this vision, NHGP first embarked on its journey to train Family Physicians in 2011, with an inaugural batch of 10 residents. "Previously, when I was an FM Resident, trainees would be rotated through four six-month postings in any discipline, and with minimal supervision from Family Physicians," said Dr Chan, recalling his own training. "By the time trainees came to the primary care sector in our third and final year, we had but a short time to understand and inculcate in ourselves the ethos and culture of family medicine practice."

Over the past decade, the NHG FM Residency Programme has trained more than 100 residents. The programme

curriculum continues to evolve in line with the development of global trends, and also to fit the needs of our nation. Today, the NHG FM Residency Programme is a holistic three-year training scheme that comprises structured clinical training and attachments, complemented by half-yearly didactic seminars and fortnightly workshops and tutorials.



“As care shifts from the hospital to a primary care setting, we also need to look at developing our skills and capabilities in areas such as pain medicine, point-of-care assessments, home-care, palliative care, and enhanced maternal and child care,” added Dr Chan, highlighting family medicine’s dynamic role. “It is an ever-evolving field that presents exciting challenges, and those who choose family medicine as their path can look forward to a dynamic journey. For example, with genomics and personalised medicine for screening and treatment gaining traction in Singapore, more Family Physicians will need to be trained in this area of growth.”

All these changes to the primary care landscape means that it takes someone special, and committed, to be a good Family Physician. They need to have the competency to provide comprehensive care for patients of various ages and gender, across a wide field of medical disciplines topics. On top of that, they need to continuously update their knowledge and master new challenges that they will face in an ever-changing environment. Yet, they need more than medical knowledge and skills. “FM Residents must be willing to care not only for the patient in their consultation rooms, but also for the patient’s wider social environment, as that is the context that the patient lives in,” highlights Dr Chan. “Their heads, hearts and hands must come together to provide the best care for their patients.”

“Family Medicine residents must be willing to care not only for the patient in their consultation rooms, but also for the patient’s wider social environment, as that is the context that the patient lives in.”

Dr Jason Chan
Family Physician,
Associate Consultant
and Programme Director
of the NHG Family Medicine
Residency Programme



GROOMING THE NEXT GENERATION

To groom a new generation of Family Physicians who are equipped to tackle the challenges of the future, the NHG FM Residency Programme offers a wide spectrum of opportunities and support. Participants of the programme rotate through, or have electives in various postings at departments such as Dermatology, Hand Surgery and Ophthalmology. The programme values an open culture learning system, where FM Residents can openly share their thoughts as well as obtain feedback from faculty members or supervisors who are always ready to listen and render help.

Over the course of the three-year programme, FM Residents would also have the opportunity to provide longitudinal care for patients with chronic diseases at NHGP’s Resident Continuity Clinic (RCC). Under this scheme, residents are given primary care exposure through patient-centred consult sessions once a week throughout the course of training. These sessions are opportunities for residents to provide comprehensive and continuing care to their own panel of patients and families. This allows FM Residents to develop skills and attitudes to provide relationship-based, holistic and value-based care to patients which focuses on the needs and concerns of patients.

Every RCC clinic is mentored by experienced FM tutors with both the relevant clinical competencies as well as leadership qualities. The tutors

will equip residents with the essential soft skills required of a good Family Physician. This comes in the form of regular competency assessments with immediate feedback from the tutors. Not only useful in increasing knowledge in conditions specific to primary care, such guidance also helps to improve the competence and confidence of the residents in terms of patient management.

FM Residents are also taught to improve their communication skills and to be empathetic listeners through video recording sessions and regular practise with one another. Such rigorous supervision helps to give our residents a headstart as they begin their journey as Family Physicians.

The NHG FM Residency Programme is a holistic programme that goes beyond improving clinical competency of our residents. The programme also looks at honing leadership skills and inculcating a strong sense of belonging. Apart from taking up key roles such as Chief Resident and Associate Chief Resident, participants could also flex their management muscles through heading one of the newly-formed FM residency committees, with guidance from dedicated faculties. Yet, most invaluable are the bonds built, as Chief Resident Dr Chen Tongyuan, Assistant Chief Resident Dr Lee Jing Kun and Assistant Chief Resident Dr Lee Wei Sheng would testify: “Nothing beats the friendship developed during the three-year programme,” they recalled fondly. “We learn, have fun and grow together.”

SIGN-UP FOR NHG FM RESIDENCY PROGRAMME AT OUR OPEN HOUSE!



Are you keen to provide comprehensive care to patients of various ages and genders, across a wide field of medical disciplines? Do you aspire to be a ‘five-star’ physician — who plays the roles of care-provider, decision-maker, communicator, community leader and manager? If you do, join us as an NHG FM Resident!

Experience our three-year residency programme via this virtual event on **16–17 July 2021**. Learn about the upcoming changes in postgraduate FM Residency slated for July 2021 from our Programme Director.

New graduates will also share their journey, and how the programme helped to prepare them for the examinations, while current FM Residents will provide a sneak peek into what to expect during training. Senior Family Physicians will also lend industry insights and shed light on professional growth and prospects.



Look out for the latest information on this event on our Instagram page [@nhgfamilymedicine](https://www.instagram.com/nhgfamilymedicine).

Up Close With

A SENSE OF KINSHIP

A passion for helping those around her has led Dr Teo Ling Li to a career in Family Medicine.

My earliest interactions with a family doctor were those I had with the general practitioner my late grandmother used to visit to manage her chronic medical conditions. It was not easy to gain my grandmother’s trust, but he managed to do so through building a doctor-patient relationship that lasted for more than 10 years. He truly went the extra mile, doing house calls to check on her on his own accord.

I found it fulfilling to research on the diagnosis and best treatment options when my father was diagnosed with diabetes mellitus, and my younger brother suffered injuries from his swimming training. I also find myself connecting with people naturally, finding solutions for them whenever they confide in me about their problems. This, combined with my interest in human biology, steered me towards healthcare.

The main reason why I took up NHG’s Family Medicine Residency Programme is because Family Medicine is a field I am naturally drawn to. I also noticed how much support NHG gives to its residents during my rotations as a House Officer and Medical Officer within the NHG institutions. After speaking to my seniors doing their Family Medicine residency and the programme director, I found that its curriculum and learning environment most suited me, and I started my residency in July 2019.

I am now heading into my third and final year of residency – Family Medicine. I look forward to the Resident Continuity Clinic (RCC) day in Yishun Polyclinic every week, where I follow

up on patients and hone my skills for primary care, under the supervision of nurturing mentors including Dr Angelia Chua, Dr Jeremy Foo, Dr Tai Zuhuang and Dr Keith Tan. They help me to apply my knowledge gained from the exposure to a variety of specialties through clinical postings (as part of the residency curriculum). Our group and individual case discussions, Mini-Clinical Evaluation Exercise practices, video consultations and reflections are helpful in all aspects. These include developing soft skills, such as communicating effectively with patients, with empathy and mutual respect.

While Family Medicine is about long-term relationships, first impressions are critical.

When I joined Yishun Polyclinic, I had to build rapport with every patient from scratch. A big part of relationship-building is in listening. I try to know them as people first: their interests, lives, goals and expectations, before addressing their condition and working with them to come up with a patient-centred care plan.

To juniors who are thinking about specialising in Family Medicine, I would say: think about yourself working in this field for the next 20-30 years. Is this something that you would find fulfilling, interesting and meaningful? I recommend reaching out to your peers, seniors and the programme director to find out more so that you can make an informed decision.

As I continue to interact with patients, I see myself growing holistically. After my

residency, I hope to continue seeing my patients with whom I have built a doctor-patient relationship during my residency.



Dr Teo Ling Li
Medical Officer
attached to
Yishun Polyclinic
as a Family Medicine
Resident



SMS DR KOH POH KOON'S VISIT TO AMK POLYCLINIC

On 19 April 2021, Ang Mo Kio (AMK) Polyclinic hosted Dr Koh Poh Koon, Senior Minister of State (Health) for the Ministry of Health (MOH), a delegation from the MOH, as well as Dr Lew Yii Jen and Dr Adrian Ee, Chief Executive Officers (CEO) from the National University Polyclinics and SingHealth Polyclinics respectively.

The visit, led by Associate Professor Chong Phui-Nah, CEO, National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) and Primary Care, and Dr Christopher Chong, Family Physician, Associate Consultant and Head of AMK Polyclinic, showcased NHGP's transformation efforts such as the care delivery models, digital transformation including tele-health services, and improved healthcare system integration that helps bridge health and social needs.

CARING FOR YOUR HEALTH

To mark World Obesity Day and Colorectal Cancer Awareness month in March, NHGP's dietitians participated in two webinars to share tips on healthy living.

The first webinar, titled 'Health 4 Life', saw NHGP partnering Khoo Teck Puat Hospital and Tan Tock Seng Hospital. The webinar was held on 6 March 2021 in conjunction with World Obesity Day, and educated the public on ways to achieve and sustain weight loss. Ms Alvernia Chua, Senior Dietitian, AMK Polyclinic, shared about NHGP's weight management programmes and addressed the role of nutrition in achieving a healthy weight and sustainable eating habits.

The second webinar organised by NHGP and supported by the Singapore Cancer Society was held



on 13 March 2021. The webinar marked Colorectal Cancer Awareness month and helped raise awareness on ways to lower one's risk by adopting healthy lifestyle habits and going for pre-emptive screenings. Ms Chan Sau Ling, Senior Dietitian, Yishun Polyclinic, shared diet and exercise tips to help reduce one's risk of colorectal cancer.



NGEMR GOES LIVE AT NHGP

NHGP has successfully implemented the Next Generation Electronic Medical Record (NGEMR) system, starting with Geylang Polyclinic on 27 February 2021 and the other five NHG Polyclinics on 3 May 2021. NHGP is also the first National Healthcare Group (NHG) institution to move to the NGEMR system. This has been made possible by the efforts of NHGP staff, who have worked tirelessly since July 2018, as well as the support of colleagues from MOH, NHG, Epic and the Integrated Health Information Systems (IHIS). The NGEMR system will enable NHGP to better provide seamless and integrated care with other care providers in the healthcare system for patients to receive care in the community.



VACCINATION DIALOGUES WITH RESIDENTS

Teams from Woodlands Polyclinic and Hougang Polyclinic took part in a series of community vaccination dialogues for residents in Buona Vista and Hougang respectively. These sessions helped address queries and concerns of elderly residents regarding the safety of and their suitability for the COVID-19 vaccination.

On 13 and 14 March 2021, five doctors from Woodlands Polyclinic participated in the Community Vaccination Dialogue sessions at various spots in Buona Vista organised by Tanjong Pagar Group Representation Constituency (GRC). The session was also attended by Mr Chan Chun Sing, Member of Parliament for Buona Vista (Tanjong Pagar GRC) as well as grassroots volunteers and medical practitioners. On 24 April 2021, two doctors and one nurse from Hougang Polyclinic addressed the residents through a Mandarin webinar dialogue organised by the Ci Yuan Community Club.

HEROES OF OUR TIME PAINTING AND ART EXHIBITION

Four staff from NHGP who served at the frontlines during the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 were featured in a painting titled 'Heroes of Our Time'. The commemorative painting was produced by the Singapore Art Society and unveiled by Guest-of-Honour Dr Janil Puthuchery, Senior Minister of State (Health) for MOH on 13 March 2021 during an art event. The artwork pays tribute to NHG and healthcare workers at the COVID-19 frontlines.



LOOKING TO LEVEL UP?

Learning opportunities abound in the arena of primary healthcare. Sign up for these courses to upgrade your knowledge, skills and even employment prospects.

GENERAL PRACTITIONER ASSISTANT COURSE

ADVANCED LEVEL

Dates: 27 – 30 Sep 2021
Time: 1.30pm – 5.00pm
Course Fee: \$697.64 (with GST) |
\$176.04 (with GST) with NSA Funding

- Communication with 'difficult' customers
- Chronic respiratory conditions
- Techniques of using different types of inhalers (*e.g. meter dose inhaler and power dose inhalers*)
- Disease process, causes, risk factors & treatment (*emphasis on lifestyle modification & prevention*)
- Blood glucose reading
- Blood pressure reading (*using automated machine*)
- Medical administration, medication safety and drug groups
- Correct placement of 12 leads ECG



FRAILTY MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

Dates: 3 Aug 2021 / 2 Nov 2021 / 22 Feb 2022
Time: 2.00pm – 5.30pm
Course Fee: \$44.94 (with GST)

TOPIC 1: EXERCISE

- Importance of regular physical activity and health
- Types of fitness for older adults
- Regular exercise routines: Choosing the right exercise types and suitable routines for older adults



TOPIC 2: DIET

- Link between diet and health
- Common nutrition deficiencies
- Healthy meal planning: 'My Healthy Plate' concept
- Recommended nutrient intake for older adults
- Foods to control hypertension and prevent osteoporosis
- Supplements in the market



Course fees can be paid via SkillsFuture credits. National Silver Academy (NSA) subsidies may also apply.

EATING WELL TO IMPROVE YOUR IMMUNITY

Date: 7 Sep 2021 **Time:** 2.00pm - 3.00pm **Free Health Talk**

The current pandemic makes it all the more important to know how to eat well, in order to improve immunity. Join National Healthcare Group Polyclinics dietitian to learn about the importance of good nutrition to boost one's immunity levels. Find out how proteins, vitamins and minerals keep our body functioning well, and learn how you can easily achieve adequate intake of such foods.

