

Transforming PRIMARY & CARE

UP CLOSE WITH

DR IAN KOH ON THE COLLABORATIVE APPROACH BEHIND THE NHG HEALTHIER SG PRIMER FOR GENERAL PRACTICE

IN AND AROUND

OVERSEAS DELEGATIONS' VISITS TO NHGP, A LEARNING JOURNEY FOR PATHLIGHT SCHOOL STUDENTS, AND MORE



EXPANDING PRIMARY CARE THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

With the rollout of Healthier SG, National Healthcare Group Polyclinics is supporting our General Practitioner partners with learning initiatives to build their care capabilities in preventive health and chronic disease management.



FOSTERING FAMILY DOCTORS AS PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

As Healthier SG paves the way for a greater emphasis on preventive care nationwide, the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics' (NHGP) work to advance family medicine and expand primary care capabilities through training and partnerships will resonate even more strongly with the national vision of transforming primary care into a key pillar of the healthcare system. Skills and knowledge acquisition for chronic disease management are crucial to the success of this national transformation of healthcare. In recognition of this, NHGP is redoubling its efforts to engage with General Practitioners (GPs) and support their integration into the public healthcare ecosystem for improved health outcomes.

In this issue, read about how we are equipping our primary care partners to deliver value-based care services for patients in Central and North Singapore. The cover story, 'Strengthening Primary Care Capabilities for Better Population Health', presents NHGP's proactive response and role in addressing these evolving needs. One example is the NHG Healthier SG Primer for General Practice, which involves the development of learning resource and training materials spearheaded by the Primary Care Academy (PCA). Designed specifically for the primary care sector, the primer equips GPs and their clinic assistants with the skills required to deliver and support health and care planning components for Healthier SG. To learn more about how the primer was conceived and developed, *Up Close With* features Dr Ian Koh, Family Physician, Associate Consultant, Deputy Head of Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic and Assistant Director of PCA, who shared how his expertise and involvement with PCA and NHGP's Specialty Advisory Group has contributed to his work on the primer.

Another avenue where we help GPs connect to the larger healthcare landscape is through the Central-North Primary Care Network (CN-PCN). Under this model, NHGP supports GPs in chronic disease management through shared resources such as nurse counselling, ancillary support and administrative services. Together, NHGP partners GPs to collectively provide quality care to patients alongside the implementation of Healthier SG.

We hope these stories inspire excitement as we embark on a new chapter in transforming primary care, as all of us at NHGP contribute to this national effort to create a Healthier Singapore.

The Editorial Team

ISSUE 20.2023

CONTENTS

3 STRENGTHENING PRIMARY CARE CAPABILITIES FOR BETTER POPULATION HEALTH

With the rollout of Healthier SG, National Healthcare Group Polyclinics is supporting our General Practitioner partners with learning initiatives to build their care capabilities in preventive health and chronic disease management.

8 IN AND AROUND

Overseas delegations' visits to NHGP, a learning journey for Pathlight School students, and more.

10 UP CLOSE WITH

Dr Ian Koh, Family Physician, Associate Consultant, Deputy Head of Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic and Assistant Director, Primary Care Academy, shares about the collaborative approach behind the NHG Healthier SG Primer for General Practice.

Editorial Team

Johnson Seah
Rachel Tan
Guo Qianping

Contributors

Ms Carolyn Chan
Dr Irwin Chung
Dr Gowri Doraisamy
Dr Ian Koh
Ms Ruth Pang

Publishing & Design Consultant



Transforming Primary Care is a quarterly publication by the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics.

© All rights reserved. No part of this publication can be reproduced in any form or by any means without the prior permission of the publisher.

For all editorial queries and feedback, please email to NHGP_CorpComms@nhgp.com.sg.

The face-to-face workshops enabled GPs and clinic assistants to learn how to support and manage the requirements of Healthier SG.



STRENGTHENING PRIMARY CARE CAPABILITIES FOR BETTER POPULATION HEALTH

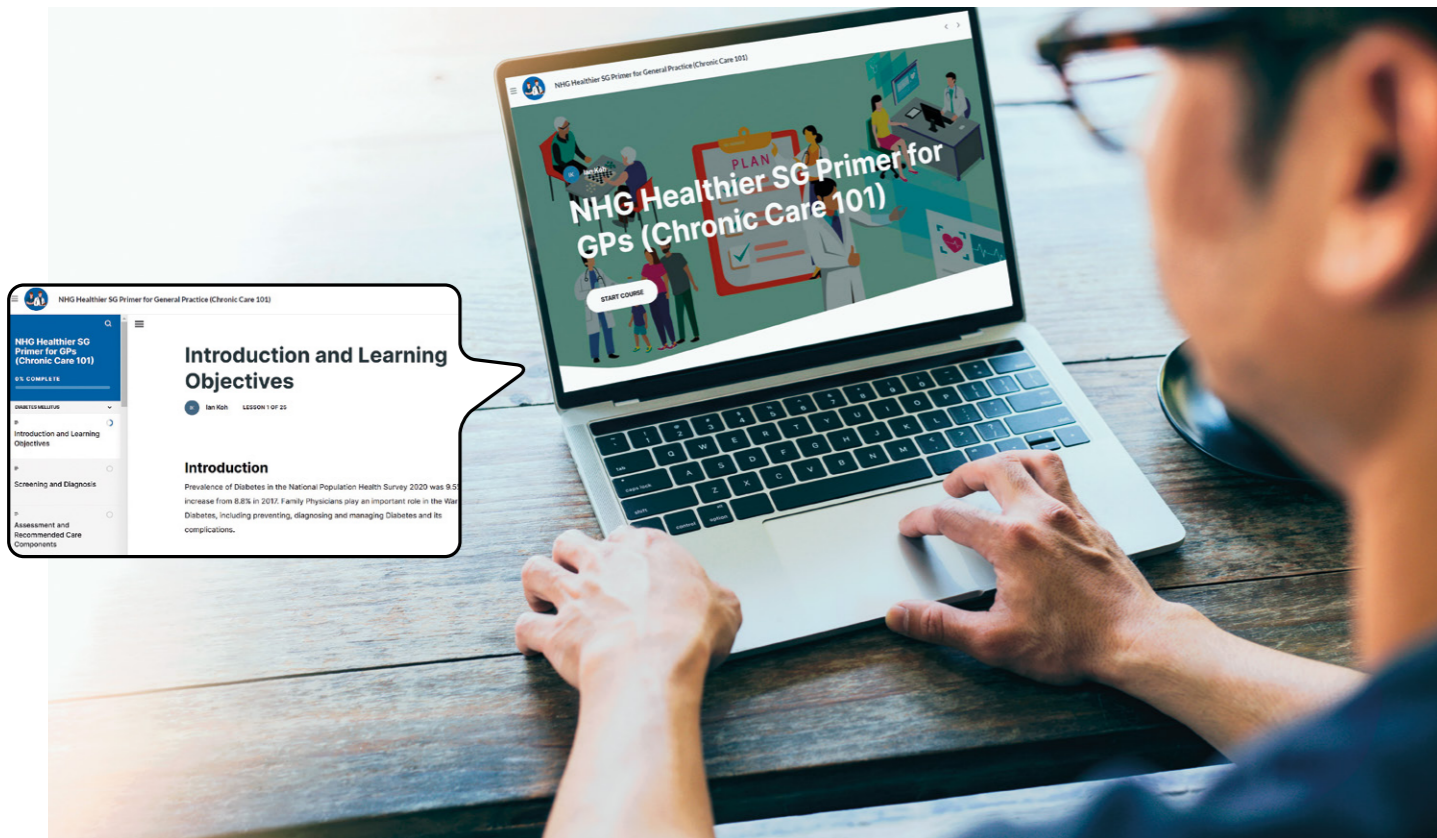
With the rollout of Healthier SG, General Practitioners (GPs) and Family Physicians will take on an expanded role in preventive health and chronic disease management within the community setting. To better equip our partners to care for patients in Central and North Singapore, the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) has implemented several initiatives to build our care capabilities.

Healthier SG is set to transform the healthcare system and the way we interact with primary care providers. It will reshape the patient-doctor relationship such that both become partners in building good lifestyle habits, achieving health goals and managing chronic diseases well, rather than being a transactional process to obtain medication or

a medical certificate. For this transition towards relationship-based preventive health efforts to take place, primary care doctors must step up to support patients on their health journeys.

As a health-promoting institution that aims to advance family medicine and transform primary healthcare in Singapore, NHGP will support





Healthier SG through our efforts to coordinate holistic value-based primary care, managed by family doctors and their care teams. Capability building for the primary care sector — including GPs in the Central-North Primary Care Network (CN-PCN) — will ensure that they are ready for their expanded scope of work.

PRIMING GPs AND THEIR CLINIC ASSISTANTS FOR HEALTHIER SG

To this end, Healthier SG-specific training and upskilling initiatives

have been rolled out through the Primary Care Academy (PCA), National Healthcare Group's (NHG) one-stop primary care training centre. "For primary care providers to effectively play a key role in driving the population's health, it requires a paradigm shift in the way that both providers and recipients approach health issues, and the way healthcare is delivered," says Dr Irwin Chung, Family Physician, Associate Consultant, NHGP, and Director of PCA. "PCA is responding to these changing needs by delivering

the NHG Healthier SG Primer for General Practice, which provides relevant training to GPs and their clinic assistants to deliver Healthier SG services."

Developed specifically for the primary care sector, these learning resources and training materials cover clinical and practice management skills for chronic diseases, preventive health initiatives and health planning. The content is delivered via a combination of online learning and in-person workshops, guided by care protocols that have been co-developed with GPs in alignment with established clinical recommendations.

Dr Chung shares that since the primer opened for participation in November 2022, close to 200 participants — comprising CN-PCN and non-CN-PCN GPs and their clinic assistants — have signed up for the training. "Feedback thus far has been considerably positive," he says, observing that many praised the facilitation, coverage and digestibility of the workshops. "The primer's

“Through participation in the workshops and e-learning modules, I'm able to verify that my practice in chronic disease management is current with what the polyclinics are practising. I recommend and encourage other GPs to sign up for the NHG Healthier SG Primer for General Practice, especially those who are new to Family Medicine or private practice.”

Dr Jimmy Chew
CN-PCN sub-lead and primer participant

blended learning design also provides them with the flexibility to fit their busy clinic schedules." GPs noted that e-learning topics such as behavioural change counselling for smoking cessation and exercise prescription were useful, especially for doctors who may not have much experience in managing chronic diseases. Clinic assistants also valued the tips on how to collect information for administrative and socio-medical use.

In a survey of participants from the first two runs of the primer, about 90 per cent of GPs expressed confidence regarding the knowledge that they acquired on Diabetes, Hypertension and Lipid disorders (DHL) management, smoking cessation, exercise prescription, dietary interventions and health screenings and

vaccinations under Healthier SG. A similarly high percentage of clinic assistants reported confidence in supporting their clinics across the same areas. To increase outreach and extend the training to more primary care professionals, PCA is partnering entities such as the Agency for Integrated Care and College of Family Physicians Singapore to raise greater awareness of the course.

Dr Jimmy Chew, one of the clinical sub-leads of CN-PCN and a participant in the primer, shares that the course thoroughly prepared GPs like himself for the key elements of Healthier SG. While the user-friendly e-learning format was highly convenient and allowed him to learn

at his own pace, he also enjoyed the workshops, which focused on chronic disease management. "Our discussions, guided by facilitators, were a mutual exchange of information as we shared our experiences and heard from other GPs," he says. "This enabled us to clarify any doubts and questions that we could not raise during the e-learning." The inclusion of nurse practitioners and allied health professionals alongside polyclinic doctors as trainers also instilled in him a better understanding of areas such as pharmacological treatment. In addition, he learned more about community resources that he could refer his patients to, such as smoking cessation programmes.





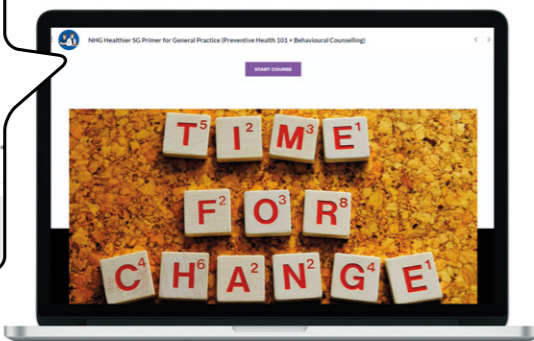
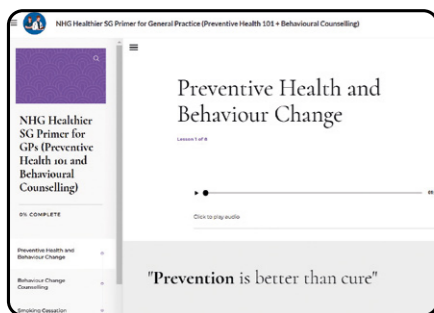
Round robin stations, which provided opportunities for discussion and role-play, further enriched the participants' learning experience.

For Dr Chew, attending the workshops together with clinic assistants generated more learning points. "It's interesting to hear their perspective and how they handle various problems. Clinic assistants can provide valuable support to GPs such as advising the patient on their eligibility for vaccinations and subsidy schemes so that the patients do not waste time registering and waiting for their turn to see the doctor if they are found to be ineligible," he adds. Overall, he says, the lessons from the training

have been useful in his day-to-day clinical sessions when managing patients with chronic diseases.

Dr Chung is optimistic that such competency building will empower GPs to play a more significant role in transforming the primary healthcare landscape. "As the focus of Singapore's healthcare system shifts from healthcare to health — from strengthening the institutions to empowering the people — we can forge a future together where patients are informed and are active

participants in their healthcare decisions in partnership with their primary care providers," he explains. "This partnership will make a profound and positive difference in the lives and health of our communities."



A TEAM-BASED APPROACH TO PRIMARY CARE THROUGH NETWORKS

Formed in 2018, the NHG's CN-PCN decentralises and brings care closer to the community. Adopting a hub-and-spoke model, this private-public partnership sees NHGP in the role of the primary care hub, with GPs acting as extensions of care delivery. Members of CN-PCN are supported by nurses and care coordinators across multiple areas. Collectively, this effort broadens the network of primary care partners and improves the provision of comprehensive and accessible quality care.

"From a primary care perspective, CN-PCN allows us to collaborate with the GPs in the private sector to bring care closer to patients," says Dr Gowri Doraisamy, Family Physician, Director of Primary Care Transformation, NHGP, and Admin Lead of CN-PCN. "By investing in the development of GPs' skillsets, we can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of primary care services, improve patient outcomes, and strengthen the healthcare system as a whole."

Apart from the current push to prepare and enhance GP competencies for Healthier SG, CN-PCN has long provided a wide spectrum of support and activities to GPs to raise the level of care provision.

Dr Jimmy Chew, who joined CN-PCN in 2022, saw it as an excellent opportunity to be part of a larger network of GPs for mutual learning and support: "The ongoing communication among the network helps us navigate various guidelines easily," he says. "During the COVID-19 period, we received circulars and guidelines from MOH which were appreciated as there is a lot of information to remember. We are also able to go through CN-PCN to provide our feedback to MOH on certain initiatives."

These include :

- **Ancillary services** such as mobile diabetic retinal photography and diabetic foot screening services for patients;
- **Nurse counselling, patient education, health promotion and patient case discussions** for more individualised care that better improves physical and mental health;
- **Administrative support** for Ministry of Health (MOH) schemes, PCN and Healthier SG-related matters, as well as the management and tracking of clinical and process indicators;
- **Notifications on Continuing Medical Education (CME) courses and CME talks organised at CN-PCN's quarterly meetings, in addition to training funds to help GPs further their education to pursue their medical interests;**
- **Regular updates on the latest mandates and regulations from MOH and the Agency for Integrated Care to ensure they are up-to-date with the guidelines; and**
- **Access to an ecosystem of partners, such as other clinics and hospitals in Central and North Singapore.**

As of 1 July 2023, more than 30 per cent of the GP clinics in Central and North Singapore have joined CN-PCN, thanks to vigorous outreach and engagement efforts from the CN-PCN administrative team. Beyond recruitment, CN-PCN, including the team of Primary Care Coordinators, will continue its work to support Healthier SG-participating GPs in social prescribing, Intermediate and Long-Term Care (ILTC) services referral, and referral to NHG initiatives for greater continuity and the right-siting of care.



KALLANG POLYCLINIC HOSTS OVERSEAS DELEGATIONS

On 11 April 2023, Dr Michael Dixon, National Health Service General Practitioner at the Culm Valley Integrated Centre for Health in Cullompton, Devon, Chair of the College of Medicine and Co-Chair of the National Social Prescribing Network, toured Kallang Polyclinic. Dr Ong Kah Pieng, Deputy Head of Kallang Polyclinic, shared about NHGP's Teamlet Care Model and self-service initiatives in the clinic that improve efficiency. Dr Dixon also viewed the Health Studio's ongoing exhibition on disease prevention and healthy living, and participated in a discussion led by Dr Karen Ng, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, NHGP, on the social prescription journey in London and NHGP.

A little over a month later, on 16 May 2023, representatives from World Health Organization (WHO) — Mr Lluís Vinyals Torres, Coordinator, Health Policy and Service Design; Dr Masahiro Zakoji, Technical Officer, Health Workforce Policy and Health Care Delivery; and Dr Juliet Rumball-Smith, Policy Consultant — were hosted by Associate Professor Chong Phui-Nah, Chief Executive Officer, NHGP and Primary Care; and Dr Valerie Teo, Head of Kallang Polyclinic. The WHO representatives toured the clinic premises and the Health Studio, and took part in a discussion on Healthier SG and NHGP's multi-disciplinary team approach to managing chronic diseases.



NHGP hosted a visit by Dr Michael Dixon (top) and WHO representatives (bottom) respectively at Kallang Polyclinic.



'PROJECT FILMS OF GOLD' EXHIBITION FAIR



On 18 March 2023, NHGP participated in the finale event of the 'Project Films of Gold' Exhibition Fair, which was organised by Youth Corps Singapore Eldercare Cluster and graced by Ms Poh Li San, Member of Parliament for Sembawang GRC. The nine-week community project sought to address social isolation among the elderly through film photography. At the event, staff from Volunteer Corporate Office, Health Promotion and Preventive Care, Primary Care Academy and the upcoming Sembawang Polyclinic shared tips with the residents to encourage healthy living and aging, as well as volunteering opportunities in NHG Polyclinics.



FIT KIT DISTRIBUTION

On 10 February 2023, an appreciation ceremony held by the Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) recognised NHGP's contributions to the national colorectal cancer screening efforts. Ang Mo Kio, Hougang and Yishun Polyclinics were acknowledged to have the highest Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) kit distribution figures in 2022, due to diligent efforts by the Nursing and Health Promotion and Preventive Care staff.



KWONG WAI SHIU HOSPITAL'S COMMUNITY CARE DAY 2023

NHGP joined Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital's (KWSH) Community Care Day that was held on 18 March 2023. Themed 'Head to Toes: Staying Alert & Caring for Your Feet', the event saw the Nursing team from Kallang Polyclinic conducting briefings for 60 senior participants from the community on daily proper care for their feet. Also present were the Patient Advisory Council (PAC) members and NHGP's Guiding Hands volunteers, who taught the elderly how to fold origami such as paper hearts and lotus flowers. To thank the staff involved, KWSH presented NHGP with a Certificate of Appreciation.



OPENGOV ASIA'S RECOGNITION OF EXCELLENCE AWARD 2023



Photo: OpenGov Asia

As a testament to NHGP's efforts to drive innovation in primary healthcare, the team led by Dr Valerie Teo, Family Physician, Consultant and Head of Kallang Polyclinic, clinched the 'Recognition of Excellence Award 2023' for piloting SMARTVacc, a fully automated Safety Manpower Productivity Accountability Real Time Analytics Vaccine System to replace the conventional manual vaccine fridges currently used. Conferred by OpenGov Asia on 11 May 2023, the awards recognise agencies and organisations that have achieved excellence in leveraging information and communications technology to make services better for the community.



POLYCLINIC LEARNING JOURNEY FOR PATHLIGHT SCHOOL STUDENTS

NHGP's Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic empowers students from Pathlight School — a school catering to students on the autism spectrum — to greater independence through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) partnership with the school. First developed in 2019 and resuming after COVID-19 in April 2023, the learning journey, which was conducted by polyclinic staff, involved equipping the youths with life-readiness skills to access primary healthcare services in the community. The step-by-step training videos — which were developed by Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic and Pathlight School and used for the learning journey — will also be shared with the other NHG Polyclinics to increase awareness of autism.



DEVELOPING A LEARNING PRIMER FOR HEALTHIER SG

Dr Ian Koh, Family Physician, Associate Consultant, Deputy Head of Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic and Assistant Director, Primary Care Academy, shares how a team-based, person-centric and learner-focused approach aided the development of the NHG Healthier SG Primer for General Practice.

“When I was a new Medical Officer in NHGP, I was fortunate to be mentored by many exemplary and inspiring Family Physicians. I saw first-hand how Family Physicians can take on multiple roles in clinical care, administration, education and research, and learned that Family Physicians form the ideal anchor for their patients within the primary healthcare system. This is reinforced in the face of the national Healthier SG strategy.

As early as mid-2022 — once the concept of Healthier SG was raised — NHGP recognised the critical need to support its General Practitioner (GP) partners in meeting the challenges and broader scope of work that Healthier SG would entail. With the assistance of NHGP's Primary Care Transformation (PCT) department, the Primary Care Academy (PCA) identified the learning needs of our Central North-Primary Care Network (CN-PCN) GPs, which in turn helped us prioritise the competencies that would enable our GP partners to hit the ground running once Healthier SG was rolled out. Throughout the primer's development, we sought inputs and received crucial support from relevant NHGP Specialty Advisory Group (SAG) experts and CN-PCN leads in validating the course content.

We also incorporated takeaways from our own polyclinic model of co-located team-based care, which is instrumental in improving patient outcomes in preventive health and chronic disease management. Our experiences guided our decision-making, such as the choice to include Clinic Assistants (CAs) as key members of the GP care team from the start. Given that our target audience is a highly heterogeneous group of learners, we decided on a hybrid model with



e-learning and face-to-face workshops helmed by our experts in Nursing, Pharmacy and Allied Health. To encourage mutual learning, GPs and CAs are given the opportunity to attend the workshop sessions together.

My role in PCA as Assistant Director includes developing and facilitating courses for healthcare professionals. Additionally, being a member of NHGP's Endocrinology and Metabolic Disorders SAG allowed me to develop much of the content related to chronic disease management on my own before consulting expert colleagues to validate our material.

Dr Eugene Chua and Ms Rafika Ramli, my co-leads in the development of the primer, were also instrumental in its content development. Dr Chua, Family Physician, Associate Consultant and a member of NHGP's Psychiatry SAG with expertise in behaviour change counselling, was able to directly advise as a subject matter expert. Similarly, Ms Rafika's experience as a PCA Training Consultant with significant experience in training nurses and care coordinators contributed greatly to the primer's CA components. That said, the primer was only made possible by strong support from the entire PCA team and our dedicated interprofessional workshop faculty from across all clinical departments in NHGP.

Three runs of the workshops have been held in 2023 so far. We will continue to enhance and evolve the primer's content based on participant feedback and in tandem with the progress of Healthier SG, in areas such as mental health, childhood vaccinations and care of elderly patients moving forward.”

“ We will continue to enhance and evolve the primer's content based on participant feedback and in tandem with the progress of Healthier SG, in areas such as mental health, childhood vaccinations and care of elderly patients moving forward.”

