



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **NHGP MARKS 20 YEARS OF BETTER HEALTHCARE THROUGH STRONG PARTNERSHIPS AND INNOVATION**

*Record-breaking mosaic art piece is staff's birthday present to NHGP*

**Singapore, 7 November 2020** – To mark its twentieth year of providing quality primary healthcare, the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) commemorated its 20th Anniversary today via a virtual event graced by President Halimah Yacob. Themed '20 Years of Better Healthcare Together', the event also saw NHGP unveiling Singapore's largest fabric photo mosaic, a birthday present by its staff, which earned a place in the Singapore Book of Records.

2 President Halimah said, "NHGP has played a key role in Singapore's primary care landscape over the past two decades. In times like this, as we face the COVID-19 pandemic together, primary care plays an even more critical role in containing the virus and keeping our citizens safe and healthy. I thank the NHGP staff for their hard work and sacrifices in support of our nation's fight against the pandemic."

#### **Building Strong Partnerships**

##### Encouraging Results for PTEC Pilot

3 One such partnership NHGP has is with the Ministry of Health's Office for Healthcare Transformation (MOHT). As part of the MOHT-NHGP Primary Tech-Enhanced Care (PTEC) hypertension pilot, patients with hypertension use a Bluetooth-enabled blood pressure (BP) device to measure their BP at home. The readings are then automatically transmitted through a mobile application from the patient's phone to a polyclinic care team. Complementing this remote monitoring system is an SMS Chatbot that sends timely advice and reminds patients to take their readings. Together, these efforts save patients at least one visit to the polyclinic each year. Results from this PTEC pilot have shown significant improvement in BP control for participating patients, compared to patients in the control group. *(Refer to Annex A for the summary results of the pilot).*

##### Signing of NHGP-SUSS MCA

4 Another partnership that NHGP will cement is with the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS). NHGP and SUSS will soon be inking a Master Confirmation Agreement (MCA) to co-develop and co-run health-related courses, which could contribute towards the attainment of a degree in Applied Psychology. Course participants will be equipped with skills to guide and

empower patients to better manage their health. This MCA marks the first such collaboration between NHGP and a tertiary education partner for the development of a course offered to the wider community.

## **Innovating for Better Patient Care**

### Expanding NHGP's Suite of Tele-Health Services

5 Catalysed by the COVID-19 pandemic, NHGP expanded its suite of tele-health services to allow patients to consult their care teams safely and conveniently from their homes. New tele-health services such as Tele-DOT (Direct Observed Therapy), Tele-Physiotherapy and Tele-Dietetic were introduced. Since early this year, many patients have indicated their satisfaction with NHGP's tele-health services, and more than 125,000 such sessions having been conducted just this year alone across its six polyclinics. *(Refer to Annex B for a full list of NHGP's tele-health services).*

### Implementing Initiatives for the Elderly

6 NHGP has also implemented various initiatives to better care for the elderly. One such initiative is NHGP's Ageing-in-Place Studio launched at Toa Payoh Polyclinic in 2010 to empower senior citizens and caregivers of the elderly with knowledge and simple measures to make their homes safer. Since 2019, all six of its polyclinics have been conducting Advance Care Planning sessions to facilitate conversations about end-of-life care. NHGP also recently introduced a Frailty Screening Programme to identify at-risk elderly patients and educate them on steps to prevent or delay complications related to functional decline. To date, more than 1,000 patients have been screened under this programme. *(Refer to Annex C for more details on NHGP's Frailty Screening Programme).*

## **Quality Care Beyond 20 Years**

7 Commenting on NHGP's journey, Associate Professor Chong Phui-Nah, Chief Executive Officer of NHGP and Primary Care said, "Over the past two decades, as NHGP grows from strength to strength, we remain firmly committed to improving the health and reducing illness of the population we serve. This can only be achieved through relationship-based care with our patients and the strong partnerships we have forged with various partners in the community. Looking ahead, NHGP hopes to continue this strong collaborative effort, with the goal of bringing *Better Healthcare Together* – for our patients, the community and the population at large."

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**About National Healthcare Group Polyclinics**

National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) forms the primary healthcare arm of the National Healthcare Group (NHG). Its six polyclinics serve a significant proportion of the population in the central and northern parts of Singapore.

NHGP provides a comprehensive range of health services for the family, functioning as a one-stop health centre providing treatment for acute medical conditions, management of chronic diseases, women & child health services and dental care. The focus of NHGP's care is on health promotion and disease prevention, early and accurate diagnosis, disease management through physician led team-based care as well as enhancing the capability of Family Medicine through research and teaching.

Through the Family Medicine Academy and the NHG Family Medicine Residency Programme, NHGP plays an integral role in the delivery of primary care training at medical undergraduate and post-graduate levels. With the Primary Care Academy, NHGP provides training to caregivers and other primary care counterparts in the community sector.

More information is available at <http://www.nhgp.com.sg>

## ANNEX A: SUMMARY RESULTS OF MOHT-NHGP PTEC PILOT

OVERVIEW
<p><b>Partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Primary Tech-Enabled Care (PTEC) Home Blood Pressure (BP) Monitoring pilot is a partnership between the MOH Office for Healthcare Transformation (MOHT), and the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP), SingHealth Polyclinics (SHP), National University Polyclinics (NUP) and Integrated Health Information Systems (IHIS).</li></ul>
<p><b>Objectives of MOHT-NHGP Pilot</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To enable patients with high BP to play a more active role in self-management to improve their health.</li><li>• To allow patients to go about their normal routines and allow remote review of their conditions.</li><li>• To empower patients and motivate them in self-monitoring and self-care.</li></ul>
<p><b>Features</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A Bluetooth-enabled BP machine that lets patients transmit data to the polyclinic through an app.</li><li>• A Chatbot which transmits simple messages via SMS to patients, in English and Chinese that provide messages to guide, encourage and remind patients to adhere to regular blood pressure monitoring.</li></ul>
<p><b>Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Mean BP levels of patients</b> in the intervention group <b>showed greater improvement over six months</b> as compared to the usual care group.</li><li>• <b>Patients with poorly controlled hypertension</b> at the start of the pilot in the intervention group <b>saw the highest benefit.</b></li><li>• The percentage of patients with uncontrolled BP in the intervention group dropped by <b><u>23.5%</u></b>.</li><li>• <b><u>60.5%</u></b> of patients in the intervention group had controlled BP in 6 months compared to 52.6% of patients in the usual care group.</li></ul>

## ANNEX B: LIST OF NHGP TELE-HEALTH SERVICES

Refer to the table below for a full list of tele-health services offered by NHGP.

S/N	Name and Details of Service
1	<p><b>Video Consultations (with doctors)</b></p> <p>Patients with well-controlled chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol are offered video consultation with a Family Physician to replace an in-person visit to the polyclinic. The Family Physician assesses the patient's medical condition and reviews the results of the latest laboratory tests. Medications are prescribed and patients can choose to have these delivered to their homes. This service allows patients to manage their chronic conditions from the comfort of their homes, reducing the need for patients to travel to the clinics.</p>
2	<p><b>Tele-DOT</b></p> <p>NHGP's Tele-DOT service allows eligible patients with tuberculosis to substitute their face-to-face Direct Observed Therapy (DOT) visit to the polyclinic with a video consultation with a nurse. This service allows patients to complete their therapy from the safety and convenience of their homes.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> As part of the Singapore Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (STEP), NHGP has been providing Direct Observed Therapy (DOT) to patients with tuberculosis.</p> <p>For more information on STEP, click <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
3	<p><b>Tele-Dietetics</b></p> <p>Patients with chronic diseases, as well as paediatric patients with feeding and nutritional needs, are offered the option of a telephone or video consultation with NHGP's dietitians. Besides convenience and time-savings to patients, Tele-Dietetics allows dietitians to develop specific dietetic interventions that are practical in a patient's familiar environment.</p>
4	<p><b>Tele-Physiotherapy</b></p> <p>Eligible patients with existing physiotherapy review appointments may be offered therapy via video consultation with an NHGP physiotherapist. This provides patients with convenient access to physiotherapy services without having to leave their homes. Patients' movements and prescribed exercises are properly guided during the video consultation.</p>

**ANNEX B: LIST OF NHGP TELE-HEALTH SERVICES (Continued)**

S/N	Name and Details of Service
5	<p><b>Tele-Psychology</b>            Eligible patients with existing psychologist review appointments may be offered the option of a telephone consultation with NHGP’s psychologist. This service enables psychologists to provide crucial mental health support and intervention to patients from a remote location.</p>
6	<p><b>Tele-Wound Monitoring</b>            Patients who require frequent care for wounds such as superficial pressure injuries or post-surgical wounds may be enrolled into NHGP’s Tele-Wound Monitoring service. This service allows wound nurses to provide remote wound monitoring and wound assessment, enabling patients to self-manage their wounds at home. Follow-ups are conducted over a telephone call.</p>
7	<p><b>Tele-DERM</b>            Tele-DERM enables Family Physicians to discuss skin conditions and treatment options with National Skin Centre (NSC) dermatologists on the same day via a secure web portal. This service allows patients with mild to moderate skin issues to receive prompt advice from a dermatologist, reducing the need for a face-to-face visit at NSC.</p>
8	<p><b>Tele-Consultation Home Monitoring and Education</b>            Patients with chronic conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol and asthma, are offered the option of one or two telephone consultations a year with a Care Manager – a nurse specially trained in chronic disease management. This replaces the physical visit(s) to the polyclinic and empowers patients to manage their chronic conditions more appropriately in the home setting.</p>

## ANNEX C: NHGP'S FRAILTY SCREENING PROGRAMME

Frailty is a condition where patients become more prone to adverse events from relatively minor health stressors. People with frailty are at an increased risk of falls, disability and hospital admissions.

Symptoms of frailty include weight loss, exhaustion, grip strength, low physical activity and slow walking pace. The degree of frailty for each patient is assessed based on the severity of the symptoms.

Refer to the table below for the key details of NHGP's Frailty Screening Programme.

<b>OVERVIEW</b>	
<p><b>Start Date</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Piloted at Toa Payoh Polyclinic in August 2019</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Objective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To keep seniors active, healthy and independent so that they can age in place with dignity in their communities and homes.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patients are screened for frailty and educational material is provided to them to increase awareness of frailty.</li> <li>• Thereafter, patients are managed according to the degree of frailty, as below.</li> </ul>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Patients identified as pre-frail or mild frail</i></b></p> <p>Elderly patients identified as pre-frail or with milder degrees of frailty are referred to community exercise programmes run by the People's Association and the Health Promotion Board, through the Community Network for Seniors.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Patients identified as frail with more complex needs</i></b></p> <p>Elderly patients identified as frail, or with more complex dietary restrictions or physical limitations, are managed by a care team in NHGP comprising doctors, nurses, dietitians and physiotherapists</p> <p>These patients are provided individualised advice on nutrition, fall prevention measures and home exercises to help patients better manage their condition.</p>