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To strengthen public-private healthcare collaborations in managing patients with chronic conditions, NHG has been working with various partners in primary care to develop Family Medicine Clinics (FMCs). These collaborations are part of the Ministry of Health’s (MOH) Primary Care 2011 Masterplan to develop primary care capabilities in chronic disease management by co-locating quality medical care and ancillary support services closer to the patients. In harnessing these resources, FMCs can provide the community with comprehensive patient-centred care close to their homes.

On 5 September 2017, Unity Family Medicine Clinic (Unity FMC) was officially handed over by the National Healthcare Group (NHG) to NTUC Health, marking a milestone in the partnership. NHG Group Chief Executive Officer Professor Philip Choo and NTUC Health Chief Executive Officer Mr Chua Song Khim were the main signatories as NHG Chairman Mdm Kay Kuok and NTUC Health Chairman Ms Tan Hwee Bin witnessed the signing ceremony.

“The Unity FMC model is based on a synergistic collaboration of expertise, marrying both NTUC Health’s strong capabilities in delivering private healthcare and NHG’s expertise and experience in clinical and quality management. The joint governance framework allows operational autonomy with public accountability to ensure that the FMC operations are aligned to MOH’s objectives for its development, that is, to encourage more patients to remain in the community for chronic care,” said Mdm Kay Kuok of the successful partnership.
The tie-up has enabled patients from NHG institutions such as Tan Tock Seng Hospital’s Specialist Outpatient Clinics and Accident & Emergency Department to continue to receive seamless care and follow-up treatment at Unity FMC. In addition, Unity FMC also receives referrals from the Institute of Mental Health for patients with mental health conditions that can be managed in the community.

Unity FMC has managed over 12,000 patient visits over the past three and a half years for various chronic conditions. NHGP has also been working closely with Unity FMC by referring over 2,000 patients with chronic conditions who live in the vicinity for follow-up care. With MOH’s support, these patients continue to receive subsidised medication ensuring care remains affordable.

Ms Tan Hwee Bin also explained the benefits of the FMC and highlighted Unity FMC’s commitment to continue to provide quality care to patients. “Many of these patients continue to benefit from the one-stop healthcare services offered by our team of family physicians, nurses and allied health professionals. NTUC Health’s purpose is to bring happiness and peace of mind to individuals and families by delivering trusted care good enough for ourselves and our loved ones. We will strive to continue to live out this purpose through the work we do at Unity FMC.”

Unity FMC is the second FMC that NHG has handed over to the private sector following an initial collaboration to develop the necessary infrastructure and medical capabilities. The first FMC, Ang Mo Kio FMC set up by NHG was handed to Parkway Shenton on 1 March 2016.

The Unity FMC model is based on a synergistic collaboration of expertise, marrying both NTUC Health’s strong capabilities in delivering private healthcare and NHG’s expertise and experience in clinical and quality management.

Mdm Kay Kuok, Chairman, NHG
PROVIDING QUALITY PATIENT CARE

Innovative medication collection for eligible patients

NHGP and NHG Pharmacy (NHGPh) jointly launched a locker service for medication collection, the first-of-its-kind in Singapore. The service, which started in March 2017, allows NHGP patients with chronic conditions and a valid NHGP doctor’s prescription to collect their packed medication at their convenience at any time of the day from more than 30 7-Eleven stores across Singapore.

The locker service for medication collection complements NHGPh’s home delivery service and provides more options to patients and their caregivers by allowing them to collect the medication on a separate day if they wished. Provided by Yamato Transport (S) Pte Ltd, the service offers a hassle-free means for eligible patients or their caregivers to collect medication at locations convenient to them, instead of making arrangements for home deliveries or making trips to the polyclinics to collect their medication.

Mr Maslan Bin Ahmad, a patient who has been benefiting from the convenience of this service said, “As I work 12-hour shifts, it is difficult for me to visit the polyclinic just to get my balance medication.

I signed up for the service through their website and it was so easy. I am happy that I can now choose to collect my medication anytime and at a location close to my home without affecting my work schedule.”

Enhanced Self-Registration Kiosks reduce check-in time for patients

Walk-in patients at NHG Polyclinics can now enjoy the convenience of booking same-day appointments (SDA) at the newly enhanced Self-Registration Kiosks. This upgrade, which features the new same-day appointment booking function, will eliminate the hassle faced by patients in having to queue up at a counter to have a staff book an appointment for them. This initiative has reduced the waiting time for patients to check-in by about 12 minutes.

These enhanced Self-Registration Kiosks were piloted successfully in July 2017 to further improve patient flow and ensure that patients have a smooth experience in the polyclinics. This service will be fully implemented across all NHG Polyclinics by December 2017.

As part of the effort to enhance patients’ clinic experience, NHGP has been continuously striving to leverage technology to improve patient convenience at various touchpoints. These have included the implementation of the Online Appointment System which enables patients to view and monitor existing appointments as well as reschedule appointments like lab and doctor consultations online. In addition, there are Self-Payment Kiosks that provide a variety of payment options for the convenience of patients and In-Queue Status Checkers which allow patients to check the number of people who are waiting in-line before their turn via a Quick Response Code (QR Code). These initiatives have automated work which was done manually in the past and has freed up staff to take on higher value work and contribute more towards patient-centred care across NHG Polyclinics.

NHGP Family Physicians conferred Fellowship to Academy of Medicine

Dr Kong Jing Wen, Family Physician, Associate Consultant and Dr Tung Yew Cheong, Family Physician, Senior Consultant, were conferred Fellowship to the Academy of Medicine, Singapore, on 21 July 2017 under the Chapter of Family Medicine Physicians, adding to the growing pool and presence of Family Physicians in the Academy of Medicine, Singapore.

Held in conjunction with the 51st Singapore–Malaysia Congress of Medicine, the 2017 Induction Comitia and 23rd Gordon Arthur Ransome Oration also witnessed Dr Lee Meng Kam Richard, Family Physician, Consultant receive the Master of Health Professions Education Singapore award.

The event was graced by Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, President of the Republic of Singapore and Patron of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore.
NHGP staff commended at NHG Awards 2017

NHGP staff were recognised for the significant contributions to public healthcare at the NHG Awards Ceremony. Held on 12 July 2017 at the Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) Theatrette, Dr Doraisamy Gowri, Family Physician, Senior Consultant, Director, Care Integration & Primary Care Transformation Office was honoured with the NHG Outstanding Citizenship Award for her exceptional efforts towards achieving NHG’s strategic objectives. Dr Ng Wei Liang David, Family Physician, Consultant, Head, Toa Payoh Polyclinic and Dr Tan Hsien Yung David, Family Physician, Consultant, Head, Pioneer Polyclinic were each conferred the NHG Young Achiever Award in recognition of their significant contributions to the organisation as future leaders.

NHGP teams who pursued projects and initiatives to raise the standards in patient-centred care were also honoured for their relentless pursuit in quality and excellence.

Gold — Tele-ECG Collaboration
The Tele-ECG collaboration between NHGP and TTSH Cardiology has helped to improve patient-centred care by right-siting avoidable referrals to the cardiology outpatient clinic.

Gold — Tele-DERM
The secure web-based platform has allowed NHGP family doctors with training in family practice dermatology to discuss skin care cases and treatment options with the National Skin Centre (NSC) dermatologists in a convenient and prompt manner, reducing the need for referrals to NSC.

Silver — Right-Siting of Chronic Disease Patients from Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic (AMK) to Raffles Medical Group (RMG)
The right-siting of patients from AMK was made possible by strong cooperation between NHGP and RMG. The teams embraced NHG’s core values of collegiality, respect and integrity to work seamlessly towards the common objective of providing patients with appropriate care.

Silver — Coronary Risk Screening (CRS) Team
The CRS team worked with Nanyang Polytechnic to develop an application software that aims to identify risk profiles of patients for major chronic conditions and provide them with early intervention to better manage population health management.

Bronze — Nursing Training Review Committee
The team has fostered the culture of a learning organisation by developing and supporting the training of nurses as part of NHG’s journey in the Regional Health System.

NHGP wins gold at AHMA 2017

NHGP’s Operations Team bagged the Gold Award in the ‘Cost Reduction’ category at the Asian Hospital Management Awards (AHMA) 2017. Selected from 418 entries submitted across 17 countries, NHGP was recognised for its automation and innovation efforts to bring about care that is both efficient and appropriate.

The entry, titled ‘Overall Reduction in System Cost — Using Automation & Innovation as Levers for Improved Productivity and Quality of Patient Care’, has enabled NHGP’s ancillary staff to take on higher value work focusing on caring for our patients and providing better quality of care for them.

Senior Nurse Manager Richard Low wins Nurses Merit Award

Mr Richard Low Sai Yin, Senior Nurse Manager, Woodlands Polyclinic and Ms Teo Lay Sze, Nurse Manager, Pioneer Polyclinic received the Nurses Merit Award 2017 from Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister for Health, at a presentation ceremony on 7 July 2017 for their outstanding contributions to the nursing profession.

In sharing his motivations for pursuing a career in nursing, Mr Low said, “Being a nurse, I am honoured to have the opportunity to make a difference in people’s lives. Working in the primary care sector allows me to help patients improve their well-being while ensuring that I am constantly improving my clinical, planning and problem-solving skills to meet the changing healthcare needs of the population.”
Engaging Stakeholders

Strategic partnerships for better health

NHGP, together with four other public health institutions, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Sport Singapore (SportSG) on 28 July 2017. The MOU is part of the Active Health Framework initiated by SportSG to motivate the community to develop positive habits towards wellness. It will see NHGP and SportSG develop an Active Health Lab at the upcoming Sembawang Sports and Community Hub where the future Sembawang Polyclinic will be co-located. NHGP’s healthcare team at Sembawang Polyclinic will be involved in the design and layout of the new Active Health Lab and will work with SportSG on future areas of collaborations.

Associate Professor Chong Phui-Nah, CEO, NHGP said, “This partnership between NHGP and SportSG will further synergise patient engagement efforts by tapping on our respective expertise to make it easier for people to choose and adopt active and healthy lifestyles.”

Family Medicine Extravaganza 2017

Dr Valerie Teo, Family Physician, Associate Consultant, Head (Designate), Kallang Polyclinic was a guest speaker at the annual Family Medicine Extravaganza 2017, which was held on 8 September 2017 at the Lee Kong Chian Clinical Sciences Building. The event provided a platform for around 200 medical students from Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and Duke-NUS Medical School and young doctors considering a specialisation in Family Medicine (FM) to learn from their Family Physician (FP) peers about practicing in different care settings.

Dr Teo spoke about her experiences working as an FP at NHGP and provided interesting anecdotes about her patients, medical students she had the opportunity to teach, and her collaborations with other health institutions to advance Family Medicine. Summing up her journey, she concluded that FM is all about people and working hand in hand to make a difference in patients’ lives on a daily basis. As an FP in a polyclinic setting, she now regards the clinical team as her second family due to the close working relationship forged.

The evening continued with a residency dialogue session where Programme Directors and residents from the various institutions shared about their training programmes. Dr Darren Seah, Family Physician, Consultant, Director, Family Medicine Development, NHGP Residency Programme Director walked the audience through NHGP’s residency programmes while Dr Keith Tan, Chief Resident shared his personal journey and experiences as a Resident at NHGP. Following the dialogue session, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and learn more at information booths set up by the various health institutions.

NHGP celebrates Physiotherapy Day 2017

On 3 September 2017, NHGP’s Physiotherapy Team organised an event at the Woodlands Community Club together with People’s Association to raise awareness about building and maintaining strong muscles for better health. Held in conjunction with World Physiotherapy Day, the event themed ‘Mr & Ms Muscle’ reached out to about 200 brisk walkers from the Woodlands Community Club as well as the community at large.

Mr Amrin Amin, Parliament Secretary, Ministry of Health and Home Affairs, officially launched the event as the Guest-of-Honour. Mr Amrin also expressed his appreciation for NHGP’s involvement in reaching out to the community to promote healthy living.

The participants learnt why exercising all muscle groups is needed to maintain physical fitness levels and how insufficient exercise can have a detrimental effect on their health, which may in turn lead to obesity and a higher risk of contracting chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease.

NHGP’s Physiotherapists demonstrated how participants could include simple exercises in their daily routine using resistance bands. It was a lively and fun-filled event where participants enthusiastically took part in the demonstrations and expressed interest in attending more of such informative events in the future.
Healthy eating talk at Health Fiesta 2017

Ms Chow Li Ming, Dietitian, delivered a nutrition talk ‘Healthy and Hearty – Do they go hand in hand?’ at Health Fiesta 2017. Organised by Sphere Exhibits Pte Ltd, a subsidiary of Singapore Press Holdings, the event took place from 9 to 11 June 2017 at Suntec Singapore. It reached out to people aged 40 and above and empowered them to live healthier through educational talks, workshops, cooking demonstrations, contests and giveaways.

More than 30 participants attended the talk on 10 June 2017 and were introduced to the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension), which encourages one to reduce the consumption of sodium and eat a variety of foods rich in nutrients that can help lower blood pressure. Ms Chow also taught the participants to apply the Health Promotion Board’s ‘My Healthy Plate’ concept in their eating practices to ensure a balanced meal. Participants enjoyed the talk and the interactive question and answer session which followed.

War against diabetes

In his National Day Rally speech, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong reiterated the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle to combat diabetes, a chronic disease that currently affects around 400,000 Singaporeans. NHGP has been stepping up its efforts to help the community in this war against diabetes through patient education, empowerment and engagement.

Start Right Programme: Eating right for diabetes

NHGP Dietetic Services launched the ‘Start Right’ programme to better equip patients from Hougang Polyclinic with dietary skills to manage their diabetes. The programme involved three interactive sessions which reached out to nearly 40 patients with diabetes.

Participants were taught how to count carbohydrates and the importance of dietary fibre as part of a healthy diet to manage diabetes. To help participants understand more about the nutritional value of packaged foods, NHGP dietitians also educated them about food labelling. The participants also picked up practical health tips to adopt when eating out. The session was well-received by participants who enjoyed the interactive sessions and appreciated gaining practical knowledge on carbohydrates and reading actual food labels.

Reaching out to Toa Payoh residents

As part of its community outreach efforts to combat diabetes, NHG Regional Health Office worked with NHGP’s Primary Care Academy (PCA) to conduct a series of workshops on the importance of weight management in diabetes care for the residents in Toa Payoh West. The workshops, conducted on 22 April, 6 May, 20 May and 3 June 2017 provided the residents with a better understanding of healthy eating and regular exercises with the guidance of NHGP Allied Health Professionals.

Ms Pauline Xie, Principal Dietitian and Ms Wong Yuefen, Senior Dietitian introduced various healthy eating and cooking methods and conducted cooking demonstrations, while Ms Cindy Soh, Principal Physiotherapist taught residents exercises to improve their physical fitness levels. Mr Mah Siew Chung, Clinical Psychologist shared tips on managing stress while dealing with chronic conditions such as diabetes and shared advice on coping with stressful situations.

Reaching out to Whampoa Diabetes Support Group

NHGP has also reached out to Whampoa Diabetes Support Group, an ongoing collaboration between Whampoa Active Ageing Committee Chairman Dr Tan Yong Seng and Toa Payoh Polyclinic’s multidisciplinary team, to conduct talks on diabetes management by NHGP and NHG Pharmacy’s healthcare professionals for residents in Whampoa.

Ms Tan Poh Ching, Senior Pharmacist from NHG Pharmacy conducted a talk in Mandarin on the topic ‘Myths & Facts of Diabetes Medication & Insulin’ on 6 September 2017. The talk proved to be an enriching experience as many participants actively shared their personal experiences when taking medications for diabetes and appreciated the opportunity to clarify the common misconceptions about oral diabetes medications as well as insulin.
UPCOMING COURSES

Care of the Elderly Workshop
The Primary Care Academy offers a training programme conducted by experienced registered nurses to equip you and your caregiver with the basic skills in caring for the elderly. If you are a caregiver or employer of a caregiver, this training programme will enhance your ability and improve your caregiver's skills in providing excellent care to your loved ones.

Course Fee: $110 (excluding GST)  Email: secretariat@pca.sg  To register, please call 64966683.

Date: 15 November 2017, Wednesday
Time: 9.00am – 6.00pm
Venue: Primary Care Academy Learning Centre
2 Teck Whye Crescent, Singapore 688846

General Practitioner’s Assistant Course: Advanced Level
The General Practitioner’s Assistant Course: Advanced Level is specially designed for clinic assistants, with the aim of helping to raise service levels.

Course Fee: $320 (excluding GST)  Email: secretariat@pca.sg  To register, please call 64966683.

Date: 22 & 23 February 2018
Time: 1.30pm – 5.00pm (both days)
Venue: Primary Care Academy Learning Centre
2 Teck Whye Crescent, Singapore 688846

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