A collaboration between NHGP and NUH – NEMO (Nephrology Evaluation, Management and Optimisation) programme has thus far helped 500 diabetic patients in albuminuria resolution or improvement. Read more on Page 4

Research at NHGP shows that photo-assisted dietary reviews improve metabolic parameters among diabetic patients. Read more on Page 5

80 residents participated in Clementi Polyclinic’s community outreach event to learn about community support and services available. Read more on Page 7

NHGP marked Children’s Day with fun activities for its young patients across its nine polyclinics island-wide on the 4 and 5 of October 2013. Read more on Page 8

Some 300 staff gathered at Yishun Safra on 5 September 2013 to celebrate the organisation’s second Culture DNA Day. Read more on Page 11
Healthcare practitioners converge for Primary Care Forum

On 27 and 28 September 2013, the annual Primary Care Forum took place at Singapore Expo, in conjunction with National Healthcare Group’s Singapore Health and Biomedical Congress. Some 1,000 healthcare practitioners and administrators from the public and private sectors attended the forum.

Themed “Advancing Primary Care: Adapting for the Future”, the annual Primary Care Forum examined the changing scope and role of primary care, and explored how primary care has to change to meet future healthcare needs.

Organised by the Primary Care Academy, the forum featured 20 prominent local and overseas speakers. Mrs Tan Ching Yee, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Health, graced the event as the guest of honour.

Professor Chris van Weel, past president of WONCA (World Organisation of Family Doctors) and Emeritus Professor of General Practice in the Department of Primary and Community Care, Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre, Netherlands, was this year’s keynote speaker. He spoke about how the Dutch primary care system reinvented itself continuously during times of crisis. He also highlighted the importance of staying true to the essence of primary care: providing continuity of care, building a trusting relationship, and being professionally responsible to an individual not bound by the nature or stage of disease.

To help primary care practitioners cope with the increasing demand for both the quality and quantity of healthcare services, Dr Andrew
Lee Ellner, co-director of Harvard Medical School Centre for Primary Care, spoke about how systems design and development of high-value health teams could achieve better quality of care at lower costs.

Two lively panel discussions, chaired by Professor Chin Jing Jih, President of the Singapore Medical Association, and Dr Predeebha d/o Kannan, Deputy Director of Family Medicine Development and Primary Care Academy, respectively, explored the challenges and opportunities of private-public partnership, and how team-based care could enhance the patient journey.

To help healthcare practitioners, especially solo GPs, navigate the medico-legal minefields in primary care, Associate Professor Goh Lee Gan, Professorial Fellow, Division of Family Medicine of National University Health Systems, delivered a lecture on “Shared Decision Making: From Abdication to Coercion”. Dr Julian Lim from private practice also shared his experience in managing risk in general practice.

Various topics such as the relevance and applicability of clinical practice guidelines in multimorbidity, international perspective on family medicine education, and team-based learning were also featured at the forum.

“I find the sessions useful, in particular the ‘Quality vs. Quantity’ presentation by Dr Ellner, as this is the problem I face in our busy polyclinics. It gave me insights on how I should prioritise my time to deliver care more efficiently.”

Dr Sim Sai Zhen, Family Medicine Resident, National Healthcare Group Polyclinics

“The forum has all the talks that pique my interest. This year, I attended the sessions on Medical Education and thoroughly enjoyed the new insights. They were certainly helpful in recapturing the essence of primary care.”

Dr Leong Choon Kit, Mission Medical Clinic
NEMO slows kidney function decline in diabetic patients

“Beyond clinical treatment, we are very much focused on providing ‘whole-person’ care for our patients via a team-based approach. Time is spent with the patients understanding their lifestyle and dietary habits and advising them on modifications where necessary.”

Dr Lim Chee Kong
Co-Programme Director of NEMO and Deputy Director of Clinical Services, NHGP

With support from the Ministry of Health, NHGP and National University Hospital (NUH) started NEMO – Nephrology Evaluation, Management and Optimisation – a programme to slow down the progression of diabetic nephropathy, a deterioration of kidney function due to longstanding diabetes mellitus, in the primary care setting.

Albuminuria resolved or improved in 40% of patients

Between April 2011 and September 2013, 4,200 patients were enrolled in the programme. Of the 1,200 patients who have completed the programme thus far, about 40% have achieved resolution or improvement in albuminuria, a pathological condition in which albumin is present in the urine. It is an indicator of damage to the kidneys.

Collaborative “whole-person” care

NHGP’s doctors managed these patients’ condition in accordance with the Chronic Kidney Disease Management Guidelines jointly developed by NUH and NHGP. One of the key interventions was initiating and/or optimising angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor (ACEI) or angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB) for these patients. ACEI and ARB are two classes of drugs that have shown to have protective effects on kidney function in diabetic patients. Dedicated NEMO coordinators manage the care delivery by multiple stakeholders and play a role in educating patients on how to manage their own conditions.

“Beyond clinical treatment, we are very much focused on providing ‘whole-person’ care for our patients via a team-based approach. Time is spent with the patients understanding their lifestyle and dietary habits and advising them on modifications where necessary,” says Dr Lim Chee Kong, Co-Programme Director of NEMO and Deputy Director of Clinical Services, NHGP.

“By working with NUH to adjust the medication therapy and practising team-based care, NEMO optimises the care of the patients at the primary care level and leads to good health outcomes,” Dr Lim explains.

Diabetic nephropathy leads to end-stage renal disease (ESRD) and dialysis

Indeed, NEMO is instrumental as a third of diabetic patients seen at NHGP were at the early stage of kidney function deterioration.

“Diabetic nephropathy is one of the major complications of poorly controlled diabetes. Based on the 8th Singapore Renal Registry, diabetic nephropathy as the leading cause of end-stage renal disease (ESRD) has risen over 40% in 1998 to over 60% in 2009,” says Dr Lim. “Those with end-stage renal disease would have to rely on dialysis for daily living, thereby affecting their quality of life.”

Great potential in stemming ESRD at primary care level

At a joint media briefing on 5 November 2013, Professor A Vathsala, Programme Director of NEMO, said, “NEMO proved that the management and optimisation of therapy for patients with diabetic nephropathy in primary care could potentially stem the rising incidence of ESRD. These efforts highlight the potential of straddling the primary and tertiary care divide to provide optimal care to patients with chronic diseases.”

NEMO patients on Singapore Flyer to celebrate World Diabetes Day

NEMO patients who have successfully completed the programme were invited to celebrate the World Diabetes Day on 9 November 2013 at Singapore Flyer, with Minister for Health Mr Gan Kim Yong.

These patients also received a pair of flyer tickets for them to bring along a family member or friend! The event, organised by NUH in partnership with NHGP, aimed to promote the importance of early detection and treatment of diabetic nephropathy, using NEMO programme as a model.
Food photos not merely for Facebook postings

Taking photos of our meals has become an increasingly common sight in Singapore, but for diabetic patients, these food photos may serve a purpose that goes beyond sharing with friends on social media sites. A research study at NHGP shows that photographic records of patients’ dietary intake help patients better manage their condition.

The World Health Organisation has predicted that the number of people with diabetes will increase from 135 million in 1995 to 300 million by 2025 with the greatest increases in Asia. Many studies reported that the use of multidisciplinary approaches with the aim of making healthy changes in lifestyle can improve glycemic control and delay or reduce further complications of the disease.

Evidence also suggests dietitian-led diabetes management and dietary advice improves metabolic outcomes in type 2 diabetes mellitus patients. However, barriers such as confusion over the proper diet components impede patients’ adherence to dietary recommendations.

In the study led by Dr Darren Seah, Family Physician–Associate Consultant, NHGP, 38 diabetic patients were reviewed at two visits with dietitians, 14 weeks apart. Patients received routine care at the first visit, and were asked to keep a three-day food photo journal. In the next visit, these photos were used to facilitate counselling where the dietitians advised the patients based on their journals, and encouraged them to take an interest in improving their health status.

Following the second visit, these patients’ metabolic parameters were measured twice, each at 12 to 16 weeks’ interval.

The photo-assisted dietary reviews improved the metabolic parameters among these patients. These include a significant decrease in body mass index, HbA1c level (average level of blood sugar over the last two to three months), and mean systolic blood pressure.

The Patient Activation Measure (PAM) scores – a scale to gauge the knowledge, skills and confidence essential to managing one’s own health – have also increased significantly. This indicated that patients demonstrated better self-management of the condition.

The study is one of six winning projects in the Singapore Primary Care Research Scientific Competition, which concluded on 25 September 2013. Commissioned by the Primary Care Academy, the annual research competition provides a platform for primary care practitioners to showcase their research work. The lead judge for the competition was Professor Chris van Weel, Emeritus Professor of General Practice/Family Medicine, Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands.

See table below for the winning research.

Singapore Primary Care Research Award 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR</th>
<th>ABSTRACT TITLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Dr Lee Kwang How Does Seeing the Same Doctor Improve Low Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol Control in Patients with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus? A Retrospective Cohort Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>Dr Darren Seah Ee-Jin</td>
<td>Photograph-Assisted Dietary Review amongst Type 2 Diabetics in Primary Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze</td>
<td>Ms Chan Cheuk Ying</td>
<td>Hypoglycemia Management of Patients with Type 2 Diabetes in Primary Care Setting: A Best Practice Implementation Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster</td>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>Dr Karen Ng Ming Yann Does a Blended Interprofessional Learning Workshop Improve Infection Control Knowledge among Primary Care Healthcare Teams?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>Mr Gavin Cheah Jia Sheng</td>
<td>Patient Satisfaction with Pharmacist-Managed Hypertension-Diabetes-Lipids Clinic and its Relation to Medication Adherence and Beliefs about Medication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze</td>
<td>Dr Richard Lee Meng Kam</td>
<td>The Prevalence of Anaemia in Patients on Aspirin Medication in a Primary Care Setting</td>
</tr>
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To encourage Choa Chu Kang residents to participate in a health and community event organised by Fei Yue Community Services, NHGP mobilised its staff to go door-to-door distributing flyers to the housing estates. The event, held in the morning of 28 September, saw some 120 elderly residents screened for their fasting glucose and cholesterol levels, blood pressure, body mass index and the risk of osteoporosis. These elderly residents, who live at HDB Rental Block 9 on Teck Whye Lane, had not participated in any health screening for more three years, and had not been previously diagnosed with any chronic diseases.

Head of Choa Chu Kang Polyclinic Dr Richard Hui, Deputy Head of NHGP’s Patient Engagement and Community Empowerment Department Dr Evan Sim, and their teams were present at the event to interact with the participants, encouraging them to monitor their health.

In addition to the health screening, packed meals and food rations were distributed to the elderly residents. Job-placement interviews were carried out on the spot to help unemployed residents secure a job. The Agency for Integrated Care was present to publicise the Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS).

Later in the afternoon, NHGP supported a block party organised by Fei Yue Family Service Centre for residents at Rental Block 165A, Teck Whye Crescent. To encourage the residents to stay active, NHGP engaged a fitness instructor to conduct a Zumba session for the residents.

Minister for Health Mr Gan Kim Yong graced both events as the guest of honour.
Sharing with Clementi residents on available community support and services

About 80 residents participated in Clementi Polyclinic’s annual community outreach event on 12 October 2013, held at Clementi Community Centre. They came to learn about the different types of community support and services available around their residential area and in Singapore.

Ms Chian Sum Ling, Financial Counsellor, NHGP, shared about the use of Medisave; Ms Kau Chung Ping, Medical Social Worker, NHGP, spoke about the different support services available for the elderly and family. Clementi Polyclinic also invited the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) and Asian Women Welfare Association (AWWA) to talk about CHAS and the support services for caregivers.

GP dialogue sessions take positive steps forward

The general practitioner (GP) dialogue sessions, which took place on 12 and 14 October 2013, saw a good start to NHGP’s efforts in engaging CHAS-certified GPs around its polyclinics.

The 11 participating GPs from both sessions expressed interest in partnering NHGP to manage stable chronic patients who are already on or eligible for CHAS in their private clinics.

The two sessions were hosted by Hougang Polyclinic and Jurong Polyclinic, respectively. Dr Lee Eng Sing, Head of Hougang Polyclinic hosted the GPs around the Serangoon and Hougang areas, while Dr Meena Sundram, Head of Jurong Polyclinic, hosted the GPs around the Jurong area. The team from NHGP’s Patient Empowerment & Community Engagement Department was also present to facilitate the dialogue sessions.

In addition to updating the GPs on the recent enhancements to CHAS, the dialogue sessions helped GPs better understand the services offered at the clinics, the profile of chronic patients seen, and the typical bill sizes of chronic patients at NHGP.

To reach out to more GPs, more dialogue sessions will be organised by NHGP. This partnership between private GPs and NHGP would give patients more options when they want to seek treatment for their chronic conditions. It also enables better handover of care.
Personalised balloon sculptures for young patients on Children’s Day

National Healthcare Group Polyclinics marked Children’s Day with fun activities for its young patients across its nine polyclinics island-wide on 4 and 5 October 2013.

At Choa Chu Kang Polyclinic, all young patients visiting the Well Women’s and Children Cluster were given balloon sculptures, personalised according to their requests. Each balloon sculpture was thoughtfully crafted by NHGP staff who volunteered for the activity to bring cheer to their young patients. Fun-filled activities such as colouring were organised at the other clinics. Various sponsored goodies such as photo frame key chains and raisins were also given out to the young patients.

The efforts underscore NHGP’s culture of care, which aims to constantly improve the visit experience of its patients.

Free medication reviews for public during Pharmacy Week

Between 14 October and 26 October 2013, National Healthcare Group Pharmacy provided 47 free medication reviews at the nine clinics under NHGP and rectified common medication-related problems for NHGP’s patients and the public. These problems include medication adherence issues, lack of knowledge about the medications, and medication duplications.

The review was held in conjunction with the annual Pharmacy Week – a national awareness campaign to promote the roles and responsibilities of pharmacists as medication custodians for the public. The tagline for this year was “Just Ask! Know Your Medicines, Get It Right!”

It is not uncommon for elderly patients with multiple chronic conditions to be prescribed with multiple drugs, sometimes by different doctors from different hospitals and clinics. Patients may also take supplements and herbal remedies that they buy off the shelves.

When a patient does not inform his doctors or pharmacists about getting medications from multiple sources, problems such as medication duplication and drug interactions may arise. Therefore, a medication review helps resolve such discrepancies through an in-depth examination of a patient’s medications alongside a discussion with the patient. It helps to reach an agreement with the patient about his or her treatment.

Patients also received free tissue packets that carried messages to educate and encourage them to keep an updated list of all medications and supplements they are taking. Posters were put up in the pharmacies to create public awareness of the types of services pharmacists could provide, such as smoking cessation and minor ailments counselling.
Gratitude brings on a smile: World Mental Health Day

“Gratitude” was the theme for this year’s World Mental Health Day celebration, which fell on 10 October 2013. At NHGP, Psychology Services and Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Division set up booths at its nine clinics and the corporate office to raise awareness on gratitude and its benefits for staff and patients.

“For the older adults, gratitude is a powerful experience and means of expression that can generate joy and hope to enhance their well-being. Gratitude is also connected to positive ageing or ageing with grace,” says Dr Wong Mei Yin, principal psychologist with NHGP who leads a team of psychologists in delivering mental health services to patients.

She explains, “It’s a way of reframing negative thoughts and seeing the silver lining of every cloud. What’s more important is that grateful people take better care of themselves and engage in more protective health behaviour like regular exercise, healthy diet, and regular physical examinations.”

Staff participated in the “Write a Gratitude Message” competition where ten NHGP staff won tickets to the world’s largest aquarium, S.E.A. Aquarium at Resorts World Sentosa, for writing a “gratitude message” to someone special in their life.

NHGP’s psychologists also conducted talks on “Gratitude and Well Being: How to Reap Emotional, Physical and Interpersonal Benefits” at each clinic and the corporate office to share with staff the significance of gratitude in enhancing the quality of work, social and personal life.

“I want to thank all the patients whom I met in Hougang Polyclinic. I am no doctor without them.”
Dr Marvin Chan, Family Physician, Hougang Polyclinic

“Thanks [to my colleagues] for walking me through this journey of being a newbie. I didn’t feel foreign; I felt family; I felt home.”
Ms Sharifa Nabilah Binte Syed Ishak Alsree, Staff Nurse, Toa Payoh Polyclinic

“I would like to express my gratitude to the care manager team for supporting and helping each other, and working hand in hand in this busy clinic. I also like to thank my supervisors for their support, guidance and opportunity to learn.”
Ms Yap Hwee Luan, Senior Staff Nurse, Jurong Polyclinic
Five NHGP staff recognised at National Day Awards

Five NHGP staff received the National Day Awards (NDA) at the Investiture Ceremony on 19 November 2013, one of whom received the Commendation Medal, and four received the Long Service Medal.

The Commendation Medal is awarded to selected individuals who have demonstrated efficiency, competence and devotion to duty for special performance under difficult circumstances. The Long Service Medal is presented to public officers with at least 25 years of service in recognition of their service contributions to Singapore.

Recipient of NDA Commendation Medal

“I am very honoured to win the NDA. Working in NHGP has been given me many opportunities to grow and contribute as a nurse clinician. I want to continue my duty to improve chronic care management and nurture my team of nurses to develop themselves to their fullest potential in professional knowledge and skills.”

Mdm Ng Soh Mui
Senior Nurse Clinician, Jurong Polyclinic

Five clinician-teachers receive NHG Teacher’s Day Award

Clinician-teachers are central to the successful education of medical graduates. Five from NHGP received the NHG Teacher’s Day Award for their commitment and contribution in teaching and mentoring junior clinicians. The ceremony was held on 6 September 2013 at Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

M adam Ng joined NHGP in year 2000. She has played instrumental roles in several projects, including the Home Glucose Monitoring Data Management System, Population and Mental Health Task Force, LIVE (Control of Coronary Risk Factors Initiative) programme, Hypoglycaemia Prevention Project, ISIS (Stroke – Integrating Services & Intervention in Stroke) programme, and OPTIMAL (Osteoporosis Patient Targeted & Integrated Management for Active Living) programme.

Madam Ng has contributed tirelessly towards the improvement of care management through improvement projects and nursing research. She leads a nursing research project titled “Evaluation of an empowerment self-management initiative (ESI) programme to improve self-management skills and glycaemic control among patients with type 2 diabetes on insulin injection”. This project serves to provide local evidence on self-management programmes.
NHGP celebrates its second Culture DNA Day

Some 300 NHGP staff gathered at Yishun Safra on 5 September 2013 to celebrate the organisation’s second Culture DNA Day. It was a carnival to commemorate NHGP’s corporate culture transformation that started in 2012. Themed “The Heart Way”, the celebration highlighted that “care and change must come from our heart”. NHGP believes that improvement to the “heart-ware” is a foundational aspect of its culture transformation. Its culture framework “Culture DNA” is made up of process improvement (OurCare) and service quality (iCARE), anchored by the “Way of Being” principles of “seeing people as people” and “holding ourselves accountable to patients, co-workers, supervisors and team members”.

These principles guide staff behaviour in providing excellent care in a supportive environment where staff feel empowered and fulfilled.

An award ceremony was held to reward and recognise staff who had won the Way of Being Award, iCARE Champion (Star) Award, iCARE HQ Partners Award, iCARE Service Partners Award and OurCare Champion Award. These winners are staff who have contributed to the organisation by providing great service or improving care processes.

In a symbolic moment, the closing ceremony saw the invited guests from National Healthcare Group and the senior management members from NHGP coming forth to complete the final pieces of a 300-piece jigsaw puzzle. The process symbolised the importance of everyone, from staff to the leadership, in building and strengthening the organisation culture.

NHGP goes active!

In the late Saturday afternoon of 5 October 2013, a spectacular sea of colours was spotted at Nanyang Polytechnic’s Sports Complex. About 800 staff, dressed in different colours representing NHGP’s nine polyclinics and the corporate office, gathered at the sports complex to exercise! It was the Active Day – a yearly event organised by NHGP to encourage staff to stay active and healthy.

The event kicked off with Zumba performance by the senior management team. It was followed by a mass Zumba exercise to help participants warm up before the Fitness Challenge. During the Fitness Challenge, all teams competed on a series of calisthenics exercises in a relay format to test various aspects of the participants’ physical fitness. The team from Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic was crowned champion of this year’s Fitness Challenge.
General Practitioner’s Assistant Course (Advance)

The course covers:

> Overview of the use, common side effects, precautions and active ingredients of medication used to treat common medical conditions, e.g. Upper Respiratory Tract Infection, Pain, Infection, Hypertension and Diabetes Mellitus.

> Train to perform common clinic-based procedures, e.g. 12 Lead ECG, application of eye ointment, ear drops, nasal spray, nebuliser via facemask and space device.

Course fee:
$380 (exclusive of 7% GST)

Date:
16 and 17 January 2014

Time:
1.00pm – 4.30pm

Venue:
PCA Learning Centre
Choa Chu Kang Polyclinic, Level 3
2 Teck Whye Crescent, Singapore 688846

Email:
secretariat@pca.sg

Tel:
6496 6682 / 6496 6683

NHGP Corporate Offices have moved!

The new address is as follows:
3 Fusionopolis Link
Nexus@one-north
#05-10
Singapore 138543

For enquiries concerning the move, please contact:
Ms Chua Li Lian @
li_lian_chua_operations@nhgp.com.sg

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