NHGP hosts Health Minister and MP for Nee Soon GRC
On 27 June 2013, Minister for Health Mr Gan Kim Yong visited Toa Payoh Polyclinic to better understand the contingency plans that are in place should the haze worsens.
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02

Ang Mo Kio Family Medicine Clinic – a new model of care

Launched on 11 May 2013, the collaboration between National Healthcare Group and Shenton Parkway offers a new avenue for medical treatment in the community setting.
Located in the neighbourhood – 4190, Ang Mo Kio Ave 6, #03-01 Broadway Plaza – Ang Mo Kio Family Medicine Clinic (AMK FMC) is less than ten minutes’ walk from Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic.

Leveraging the strengths of both the public and private sectors, the new entity is staffed by two full-time Family Physicians from Parkway Shenton, and experienced nurses, allied health professionals, pharmacy and laboratory technicians, care facilitators and operations staff from National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) to provide a comprehensive range of services. These include treatment of common ailments like flu, acute and chronic care, diabetic foot and eye screenings, treatment procedures, and pharmacy and laboratory services.

To keep medical bills affordable for patients, eligible Singaporeans may apply for subsidies under the Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS) and Medisave under the Chronic Disease Management Programme at AMK FMC. Patients may also request to see the same doctor for all their visits for better continuity of care.

In setting up the AMK FMC, general practitioners (GP) in the area were consulted for ideas and concerns. Dialogue sessions and community events were held to reach out to grassroot leaders, local advisors and the community to get buy-in and promote support for the FMC. All the pre-launch efforts have translated into a smooth opening in May 2013.

The new model of care is part of the Ministry of Health’s Primary Healthcare Master of engaging private GPs to help meet the growing demand for health services. Following the AMK FMC, NHG’s second FMC in Serangoon is targeted to be ready by early 2014.

At the soft opening of AMK FMC: (left to right) Mr Leong Yew Meng (CEO, NHGP), Prof Chee Yam Cheng (Group CEO, NHG), Mr Soh Gim Teik (Board Member, NHG), Ms Grace Chiang (COO, NHGP), Prof Philip Choo (Group Deputy CEO, NHG), Mr Seng Han Thong (Member of Parliament, AMK GRC), Dr Koh Hau-Tek (Medical Director, Parkway Shenton), Dr Gilbert Yeo (Lead Doctor, AMK FMC).

On 5 July, AMK FMC hosted visitors from AWWA (Asian Women’s Welfare Association) Home. Dr Djoni Huang, Deputy Head, Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic, and Ms Regina Goh, Deputy Director, Operations, NHGP, led the tour and introduced the facilities and the full spectrum of services available. The visit helped AWWA Home, one of NHGP’s community partners, to better understand how AMK FMC works to provide personalised and team-based care for patients. Moving forward, AMK FMC will work closely with AWWA Home to explore ways to benefit residents from the Home through the wide range and quality of services offered at the new clinic.
Toa Payoh and Yishun Polyclinics were privileged to host two separate visits by Health Minister Gan Kim Yong and MP for Nee Soon GRC Patrick Tay respectively. The presence of these special guests at both clinics demonstrated their concern for polyclinics’ staff battling the haze conditions and other threats.

Minister assured of NHGP’s haze contingency plans

On 27 June 2013, Minister Gan was at Toa Payoh Polyclinic to better understand the contingency plans that have been put in place should the haze worsen. He also thanked and encouraged NHGP frontline staff for their perseverance to help patients through these trying times.

Minister Gan acknowledged that polyclinics play a key role in ensuring public health preparedness, and he also recognised that polyclinics would often be the first to experience any increased workload.

The Minister spoke to the staff, and was heartened to see them coping well and stepping up to deal with different threats such as the haze, the dengue epidemic and a possible risk of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). While thanking the staff, he also reminded them to stay healthy.

Speaking to the media at the visit, Minister Gan also shared three focus areas for public healthcare — how to ensure patient safety, how healthcare institutions can meet patient demand should haze-related cases surge, and how to minimise disruptions to existing services.

Encouragement from the Union

Separately, on 3 July 2013 Yishun Polyclinic hosted MP Patrick Tay who is also the Executive Secretary of the Healthcare Services Employees’ Union (HSEU). He was there to encourage and thank staff for helping patients and the Yishun residents weather the haze. Accompanying him were Ms Thanaletchimi, President of HSEU and Mr Charles Ng, Deputy Executive Secretary of HSEU.

At their clinic walkabout, the HSEU team spoke with NHGP staff to understand how they were coping with the haze and to stress the importance of taking care of their own health as well. Mr Tay reminded them to stay vigilant and safe from dengue as the clinic was located in a dengue hotspot. The visit ended with NHGP thanking the union for its support and recognising the need for everyone to keep fighting the haze diligently.

Robust haze contingency plan

NHGP stays alert

In the meantime, NHGP is building a robust haze contingency plan in case the situation worsens again. For instance, air-conditioned rooms in the polyclinics could be converted to waiting areas should the Pollution Standards Index (PSI) reading exceed 300. Air-conditioned tents could also be set up at polyclinics with spare space. A triage system has also been put in place through which staff would identify vulnerable patients with respiratory conditions. Tele-consulting services could be extended to patients with respiratory conditions to minimise their travelling exposure during the haze. If necessary, NHGP would engage general practitioners (GPs) in their respective vicinities to get help in easing patient load during critical haze periods.

Measures to protect staff

All NHGP staff were issued with N95 masks for haze protection. Staff who worked in non-air conditioned areas in the clinics were required to don N95 masks when the PSI reading exceeded 100. Staff were also given eye drops to relieve any eye discomfort caused by the haze. Lunch was provided to staff who were on duty to minimise outdoor exposure.

While the skies have cleared up recently, and haze-related cases have fallen, NHGP will stay alert. With the looming threats of MERS and dengue as well, the battles ahead could be long. All staff should take heart that everyone is ever ready and well equipped to combat these threats.
Engaging GPs on right-siting of care

NHGP’s PEACE (Patient Empowerment and Community Engagement) department organised a GP dialogue session at Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic on 29 June 2013. The session was part of NHGP’s efforts to engage Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS)-certified GPs around Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic to support the partnership in managing stable chronic patients who are eligible or already on CHAS.

Six interested GP representatives from Frontier Medical Associates, Tan’s T&T Clinic & Surgery, Wong Clinic & Surgery, Joyspring Family Clinic, Raffles Medical AMK and Healthway Medical Corporation attended this dialogue to understand the value that NHGP brings to CHAS chronic patients — that’s to improve the accessibility and continuity of care as part of a public-private care plan partnership.

Dr Djoni Huang, Deputy Head, Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic, shared the proposed types of patients who could be referred to CHAS-certified GPs and a workflow to facilitate the transference of care for these patients. To help the CHAS-certified GP partners understand the quantum of charges borne by CHAS chronic patients, Mr David Kok, Deputy Director, Finance, NHGP, explained the range of NHGP charges typically experienced by the Blue CHAS card holders. Blue CHAS card holders are patients whose per capita monthly household income is less than $900. They receive more subsidies than the Orange CHAS card holders, whose per capita monthly household income is more than $900 but less than $1,500.

The GP partners expressed their willingness to receive stable (i.e. patients with one or two types of medications) and newly diagnosed Blue CHAS card holders (i.e. patients not yet on medications or possibly with one or two types of medications) from NHGP. This collaboration would allow more NHGP patients to have greater access to optimised care.

Additional safety net for needy patients at polyclinics: Medifund

Polyclinic patients who could not afford to pay their medical bills despite Medisave and MediShield coverage now have an additional safety net – Medifund. The scheme, which used to be available only at tertiary, intermediate, and long-term care facilities, has been made available at NHGP since 28 June 2013, following the approval by MOH.

The endowment fund, set up by the Government to help needy patients to pay for their medical expenses, is available in three categories:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medifund</th>
<th>for Singapore Citizen adult above 18 and below 65</th>
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<tr>
<td>Medifund Silver</td>
<td>for Singapore Citizen elderly age 65 years or above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medifund Junior</td>
<td>for Singapore Citizen children age below 18</td>
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A Medifund committee made up of four public members was formed and approved by MOH on 5 June 2013. The committee will oversee the disbursement of the funds, review and approve all non-straightforward applications. The Medifund accounts will also be subject to annual audit by MOH.

NHGP’s Financial Counsellors (FC) will continue to assess patients based on the Medifund criteria. The FC role was created by NHGP in 2006 to help patients with financial difficulties. They advise patients on the various financial schemes, such as Medisave and Baby Bonus, to help relieve patients’ medical expenses. They also help patients to be financially self-reliant through advising them on approaching Community Development Council for job placements and how to better manage their living expenses.

With MOH funding, NHGP hopes that they would be able to assist more needy Singaporeans to pay for their medical needs.
Woodlands Dental Clinic reopened in June 2013 after a major facelift from April 2013 to May 2013. The new Dental Clinic now has four additional consultation rooms, making it a total of 15 consultation rooms available to meet the public demand for dental care.

The new Dental Clinic was enhanced to provide air-conditioned comfort for all patients. In terms of privacy, 12 individual consultation rooms were enclosed, an improvement from the previous “open” concept.

With X-ray facilities in 12 consultation rooms, it brings greater convenience to NHGP’s patients and improves the clinicians’ workflow as unnecessary movement is minimised.

Other improvements were made to the sterilisation and decontamination rooms to facilitate workflow. Staff amenities were also enhanced to create a more comfortable and safer workplace.
**OHSAS surveillance audit a success**

NHGP has successfully maintained their OHSAS 18001 certification in the recent OHSAS (Occupational Health & Safety Advisory Services) surveillance audit conducted by an appointed Certification Body, TÜV SÜD PSB on 27 June 2013. Choa Chu Kang and Yishun Polyclinics were surveyed.

The two surveyors were particularly impressed with the organisation’s commitment in leading the successful implementation of the Occupational Health and Safety Management System.

The teams from the clinics, together with the support of HQ’s Operations Support Services (OSS) team effectively facilitated the auditors’ walkabout and survey process. There were no nonconformity findings throughout the audit.

**NHGP staff recognised at PS21 Star Service Award**

NHGP congratulates Mdm Jenny Tan Hong Mui, Health Attendant at Bukit Batok Polyclinic, for winning the PS21 Star Service Award 2013. She received her award at the Excellence in Public Service Awards ceremony organised by the Public Service Division on 29 May 2013.

The PS21 Star Service Award recognises the good work of public officers and agencies as well as members of the public who have been helpful and have made significant contributions as customers.

Mdm Tan stood out with her thoughtfulness and cheerful personal touch in assisting patients. She has also garnered many compliments from patients who were touched by her kindness and compassion. Jenny’s exemplary dedication and commitment to excellence has set high standards for quality and service levels in NHGP.

The extra mile that she has taken to care for patients was also highlighted in *The Straits Times* by patient Mr Bennie Cheek. In 2007, Jenny received the Service Champion Award for embracing the NHG Care standards that year.

In 2008, Jenny also won the NHG Quality Pillar Award as recognition for her selfless support of patients and colleagues in her role as an NHG Service Ambassador. For the Excellent Service Award 2008 and 2009, Jenny also received the Star Award in recognition of her outstanding contribution and commitment to excellent service. In 2012, Jenny was also presented with NHGP’s iCARE Champion Star Award 2012 for taking pride and ownership in delivering care and excellent service for patients and their caregivers.

Jenny’s achievements over the years have not only recognised her as an excellent healthcare service provider, but also inspired her colleagues to care for and make a difference in their patients’ lives.
Two nurses were recognised at the annual Ministry of Health’s Nurses’ Merit Awards Ceremony on 3 July 2013. Er Lian Hua, Senior Nurse Clinician, Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic, and Wendy Ong Kim Leng, Senior Staff Nurse, Woodlands Polyclinic, received their Merit Awards from Guest-of-Honour Dr Amy Khor, Minister of State for Health and Manpower. They were among 77 nurses who were rewarded for having demonstrated consistent and outstanding performance over the past three years, for having participated in professional advancement courses, and for promoting a professional image of nursing.

SNC Er Lian Hwa leads a team of care managers whose major role is to empower patients with chronic diseases with the knowledge and skills to administer self-care. She serves patients wholeheartedly and enjoys excellent rapport with them because of her commitment to service excellence.

An inspiration to her colleagues, SNC Er nurtures and develops her team members, encourages them to upgrade themselves through advanced diploma courses, and guides them through service changes and new developments.

As an educator, she delivers lectures in the self-management of chronic disease and nursing management of heart failure as part of the foundation course on chronic disease management at the Primary Care Academy (PCA). She effectively mentors and guides nurses pursuing the Specialist Diploma in Nursing (Diabetes Management & Education) during their clinical attachments.

Among SNC Er’s many accomplishments was her piloting of several notable integrated programmes for chronic patients. These include: the Health & Mind Clinic that practises a team-based approach in the management of patients with mental health issues within a primary care setting; the I-Control 2 programme that seeks to better manage stable hypertensive and hyperlipideamia patients; and Dementia Integrated Care, a programme that manages stable dementia patients in primary care.

SSN Wendy Ong is the clinic’s asthma champion. She ensures appropriate follow-up for all asthma patients treated at the clinic. She also provides regular refresher training and updates for all nurses involved in asthma care and conducts sharing sessions for Patient Service Associates and Health Attendants to familiarise themselves with the asthma control test forms.

SSN Wendy’s enthusiasm in improvement work has caught the eye of Dr Rufus Daniel, Deputy Clinic Head of Woodlands Polyclinic, who worked closely with her to develop and improve the work processes for Code Blue, an alert system for patients who collapse in the clinic with no sign of breathing and pulse.

At work, Wendy is confident, committed, knowledgeable, and an excellent role model for the staff. Her dedication to her work has won compliments from patients for her care, concern and friendliness. Wendy’s spirit of volunteerism extends beyond her job, and she has participated and taught cardiac resuscitation procedure at the National Life Saving Day in 2011 and 2012.

Wendy’s many accomplishments include being a member of the team that won the 2010 Excellence Award in Quality Improvement Project and Best Project Award in Clinical Practice Improvement Programme. No stranger to service excellence, she has also won the Excellence in Service Award (EXSA) in 2007 and 2008. EXSA is a national award that recognises individuals who have delivered quality service. SNC Wendy is a trained instructor in Basic Cardiac Life Support and Automated External Defibrillator at the Primary Care Academy for doctors and nurses.
Making a bald statement
Contributed by Mary Anthonette Valdemoro, Senior Dental Assistant, Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic

I am passionate about volunteering. I usually invest my free time at various nursing homes, keeping the elderly active with arts and crafts, bingo and simple games. Over the past few weeks, I have given more serious thought to taking my volunteerism one step further: I contemplated shaving my hair in support of the Children’s Cancer Foundation (CCF) fundraising event – Hair for Hope. By taking this step, I felt I could do more to create awareness for childhood cancer in Singapore, and there is no better way to do it than by taking part in this event.

Shaving my hair is also a personal challenge because I have kept my hair long for over ten years. It was not an easy decision to make, but apart from creating awareness, I also hope to gain a personal understanding of the ordeal that children go through when they lose their hair because of cancer. Children are easily affected if they stand out physically from their peers. As an ambassador for CCF, I would like to show the kids and their families that they are not alone in their fight against cancer, and that it is possible to be bald and beautiful.

Ever since I made the pledge to shave my hair, the support from my family, friends and colleagues has been very encouraging. I will miss my hair but I am excited as I can’t wait to show off my new look and do my part as an ambassador!

NHGP staff donate clothes for charity

Four wagons of pre-owned clothes were donated by NHGP staff for Singapore’s first Electrolux Washing-thon event.

As part of the NHGP’s Corporate Social Responsibility initiative, NHGP HQ staff donated four wagons of pre-owned clothes in support of a charity drive by Electrolux. The clothes collected between 28 and 31 May 2013 were laundered during Singapore’s first Electrolux Washing-thon event on 13 – 15 June before they were distributed to needy communities in Singapore, Cambodia and Laos supported by Movement for the Intellectual Disabled of Singapore (MINDS) and Blessings in a Bag (BIAB).
Promoting hand hygiene for staff and public

Hand hygiene begins with me
To celebrate Hand Hygiene Day on 5 May, NHGP conducted activities for both staff and the public to promote hand hygiene. Booths were set up to encourage public interest and participation. For instance, UV lights showed the existence of microorganisms on hands that naked eyes could not detect. Infection Control Advocates conducted public education on when hands should be cleaned and demonstrated the six simple steps of hand washing.

Lunch talks
Lunch talks were organised for staff to highlight the importance of hand hygiene and compliance. Staff participated in self-assessment quizzes, skits and demonstrations. All NHGP staff received a specially-designed badge with the slogan “Hand hygiene begins with me”.

Continuous improvement
The clinics’ infection control teams have successfully organised fun-filled events for a worthy cause. NHGP will continue its efforts to promote optimal hand hygiene for their staff and patients, as well as for the public.

Anderson Secondary School visits Hougang Polyclinic
Following The Straits Times report (25 March 2013) on NHGP’s improvement in the recent Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore (CSISG) survey, a team of administrators from Anderson Secondary School visited Hougang Polyclinic on 21 May 2013 to learn more about the Group’s culture transformation.

They were warmly welcomed by Dr Lee Eng Sing and Ms Tan Seok Peng, the Head and Operations Manager of Hougang Polyclinic respectively, as well as Ms Eliza Chee, Manager of Service Leadership & Patient Relations, Operations, NHGP, who walked them through NHGP’s Culture DNA, the organisation’s culture, service, and process improvement framework underpinned by the principle of seeing people as people.

“We may be from different sectors — one in healthcare, the other in education — but at the end of the day, we are all providing a service to the public. That’s when service quality comes in,” remarked Ms Patricia Liew, Administrative Manager of Anderson Secondary. “This visit has helped us learn what we can do to improve services in the education sector. It must come from the heart, treating people as people. This is truly inspiring!”
Drooling in kids

Drooling, or spillage of saliva over the lower lip, is common in babies and toddlers up to the age of 18 months. Some children may continue to drool up till the age of three. Beyond this, if drooling continues, or if it is accompanied by fever or swallowing problems (at any age), a doctor should be consulted.

Causes of drooling

Drooling has several causes. These include: teething, inflammation or infection of the oral cavity, dental problems, upper respiratory infections, nasal allergies, allergic rhinitis, limited sensitivity in the muscle and structures in and around the mouth, or poor head control and decreased neck strength. Sometimes, adverse effects of medications like tranquillisers or anticonvulsants could also cause drooling.

Though it is normal for babies and toddlers to drool, medical help must be sought if your child continues to drool excessively after you have tried the above activities.

What can be done?

These solutions could minimise and control drooling:

- Exercise good oral hygiene like brushing teeth or rinsing the mouth to prevent dental problems.
- Eat a variety of foods with different temperature, tastes and textures to improve sensory stimulation of the child’s mouth to help him or her become more aware of the drooling sensation from the mouth. Chewy foods like dried fruit and breakfast bars are also ideal for strengthening the mouth. Try to avoid sweet fizzy drinks, sugary and acidic food as these may increase saliva production.
- Allow the child to dab the mouth instead of wiping across it and the chin. Dabbing reduces local stimulation of the salivary glands.
- Encourage the child to close his or her mouth by sucking, blowing and chewing to build the mouth muscle tone; use bubbles, whistles, party blowers or balloons.
- Remind the child to close the mouth by imitating your action. Practice closing his or her mouth by holding a piece of paper between the lips for a few seconds.
- Remove the pacifier or restrict its use to bedtime only.
- Encourage drinking from a sipping cup or sucking through a straw.
- Get child to puff out his/her cheeks and let them go. This can be done in front of a mirror.

Caregiver’s course: Care of the Elderly

Approved course by the Centre for Enabled Living, Singapore

With the busy schedules of Singaporeans, getting someone to help out at home is often a necessity. But if you have elderly parents or young children at home, would you entrust their care to a caregiver who may not be adequately trained? Or would you want to learn the skills on how to care for your family more effectively?

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.

The course covers

- Hygiene and grooming
- Waste handling
- Safety
- Feeding
- Communication

Date:
21 October 2013, Monday

Time:
10.00am – 5.00pm

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

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INTERNATIONAL SPEAKERS

Professor Chris van Weel
- Emeritus Professor of General Practice/Family Medicine, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands
- Professor of Primary Health Care Research, Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia
- Past President, World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA)

PLENARY SESSIONS
- Primary Care at the Forefront of Systemic Change
- Clinical Practice Guidelines & Multimorbidity: Relevance & Applicability

SYMPOSIUM SESSION
- International Perspective on Educating the Primary Care Physician

Dr Andrew Lee Ellner
- Co-Director, Center for Primary Care, Harvard Medical School

PLENARY SESSION
- The Primary Care Paradox: Quantity vs Quality

SYMPOSIUM SESSION
- Orchestrating Care for the Complex Patient

For more details on the Primary Care Forum 2013, please visit www.pca.sg/events