ISSUE 18.2022

National Healthcare Group
POLYCLINICS

Transforming PRIMARY & CARE

UP CLOSE WITH
NHGP PATIENT SERVICE ASSOCIATES SHARE ABOUT THEIR WORK AND HOW IT HAS EVOLVED OVER TWO DECADES

IN AND AROUND
NHG WORLD DIABETES DAY, THE NATIONAL HEALTHCARE INNOVATION AND PRODUCTIVITY AWARDS 2022 AND MORE



CONNECTING PATIENTS TO HEALTHCARE

How NHGP has been connecting people more seamlessly with services and resources through apps and devices.

2022 APEX® AWARDS FOR PUBLICATION EXCELLENCE



POWERING UP PATIENT ENGAGEMENT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Strong patient-doctor relationships, good health literacy and lifestyle adjustments are key to quality delivery of care. In line with the Healthier SG strategy to focus on consistent and continuous care, the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) continues to innovate and transform primary care for the overall health of the population. As we focus our efforts on providing care to patients, families and residents, we are employing digital transformation strategies by integrating technology into our care processes to elevate operational efficiency at our polyclinics and ensure that a patient's care journey is seamless and convenient from start to end.

In our cover story 'Engaging Patients Using Technology', read about how NHGP has embraced various forms of technology to keep patients, families and residents healthy by creating more touchpoints for greater engagement. Our upgraded multi-function self-service kiosks and the programmes on the National Healthcare Group's (NHG) upcoming mobile app, such as the Chronic Disease Management (CDM) BOOST (Bringing about Optimal Outcomes through Self-care and Technology), will contribute to enhancing the patient experience.

These digital initiatives not only streamline administrative tasks such as appointment scheduling, bill payments and prescription management; they also expand and enhance interactions between people and their healthcare teams. By increasing such contact time, we are able to build better relationships based on familiarity and trust with our patients, provide them with greater access to tools and resources for improved health outcomes, and empower patients to take a proactive approach to their treatment and preventive health.

The convergence of technology and people at the heart of healthcare is showcased in this issue's *Up Close With*. We speak to two veteran Patient Service Associates (PSAs), Ms Hamnah Rahmat and Ms Parvathy D/O Mariappan, who shared how their job scopes and skills have evolved with changing times over the years, and what motivates them to help patients to the best of their abilities.

As we welcome the new year, let us continue to strive and make progress in improving our population health through innovative healthcare practices.

The Editorial Team

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ENGAGING PATIENTS USING TECHNOLOGY

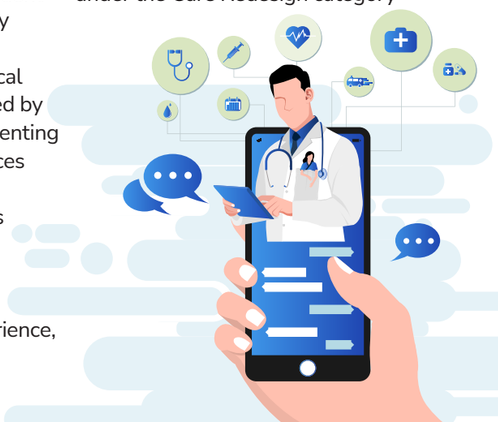
As we move towards enhancing Singapore's healthcare system for better population health, technology will play a key role in improving the patient experience. National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) is taking steps to connect people more seamlessly with services and resources through apps and devices, empowering them to take ownership of their own health.

Healthier SG – the multi-year nationwide healthcare transformation strategy – will see a shift in focus towards preventive care and early intervention. The strategy aims to deepen collaborative ties among healthcare providers and partners in the community, and help people take steps towards better health through stronger patient-doctor relationships. To support patients in their self-care journey, NHGP will continue to leverage technology to roll out innovative initiatives that can bolster multidisciplinary efforts for better patient outcomes.

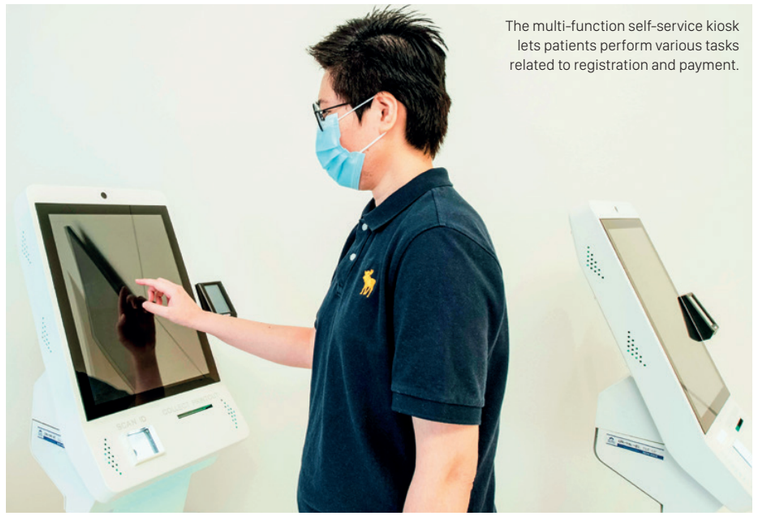
DIGITALISING THE PATIENT CARE MODEL

NHGP has steadily progressed in implementing digital solutions for care delivery and an improved patient experience. This ranged from fully transitioning to the nationwide Next Generation Electronic Medical Records (NGEMR) system initiated by the Ministry of Health, to implementing a wide suite of Tele-Health services that facilitate the monitoring and management of conditions across all NHG polyclinics.

As a testament to their impact on productivity and patient experience, the integration and expansion of tele-consultation services into NHGP's Teamlet Care Model was awarded the Best Practice Medal under the Care Redesign category



> The [self-service] kiosks empower our patients and caregivers with more self-help options so that they can have a more pleasant and seamless experience with reduced waiting time and minimum time spent in the clinic."
>
> **Ms Sharon Chen**
> Director, Operations, NHGP



The multi-function self-service kiosk lets patients perform various tasks related to registration and payment.

at the National Healthcare Innovation and Productivity (HIP) Awards 2021.

PUTTING THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY INTO PATIENTS' HANDS

Mobile technology has the potential to increase contact time between people and healthcare professionals for better relationships and targeted support interventions. By potentially introducing more touchpoints for patients, both convenience and access to care can be greatly enhanced.

One upcoming innovation which seeks to leverage said technology is the National Healthcare Group's (NHG) mobile app. It aims to promote stronger health ownership and good habit-building, by serving as a resource for patients and users to take a proactive approach to their treatment and preventive health.

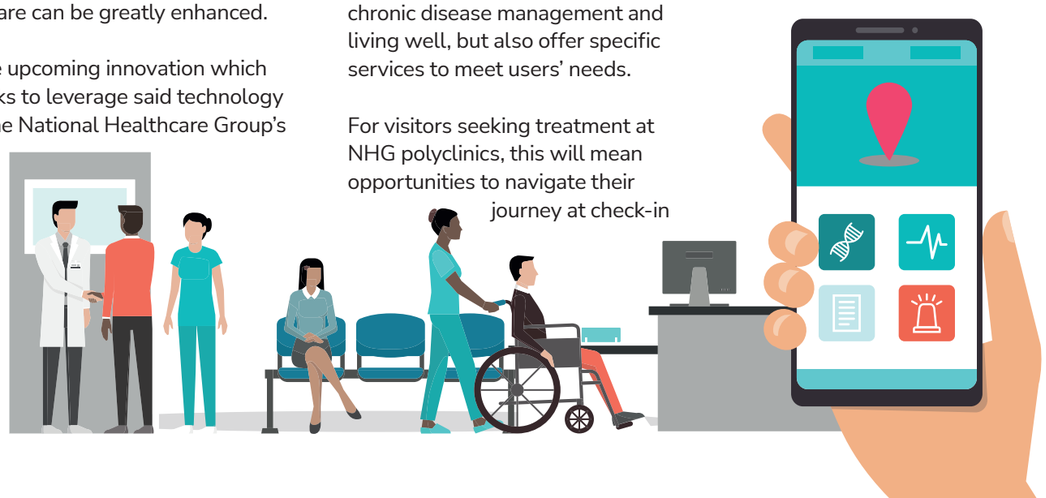
As a one-stop digital platform, the upcoming app will not only seek to increase patient engagement by providing useful tools and functionalities designed to increase awareness about healthy behaviours, chronic disease management and living well, but also offer specific services to meet users' needs.

For visitors seeking treatment at NHG polyclinics, this will mean opportunities to navigate their journey at check-in and check-out contact spots using technology, from appointment scheduling to completing pre-screening questionnaires prior to clinic visits, and receiving updates on the queue status and e-itinerary.

Beyond the existing services on HealthHub, the national population enablement platform for digital health, NHG's mobile app aims to offer additional services such as the Chronic Disease Management (CDM) BOOST (Bringing about Optimal Outcomes through Self-care and Technology) and Health Screening Nudge programmes.

Jointly developed by programme co-lead Dr Sabrina Wong, Deputy Director, Clinical Services, NHGP, and Tan Tock Seng Hospital, the CDM BOOST programme will provide patients who have prediabetes or type 2 diabetes with a list of daily tasks that supports their health goals, following the patients' enrolment by their clinician. This may include logging their blood glucose level and blood pressure as well as other metrics that can educate and heighten self-awareness of their day-to-day activities.

Similarly, the Health Screening Nudge feature aims to improve users' health literacy by prompting them to complete a simple questionnaire and thereafter suggesting health screenings based on the user's profile. Developed by NHGP's Health Promotion and Preventive Care Division, the Health Screening Nudge will also let users access patient and education materials related to their recommended health screenings.





STREAMLINING THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE AT EVERY VISIT

Another innovative feature to be made available on the upcoming app, Augmented Reality (AR) Wayfinding will merge physical and digital navigation to create an effective guide for visitors to NHG polyclinics. By providing quick access to an indoor map of the environment and indicating the user's current location, this will allow new patients and visitors to locate relevant services or resources on different floors easily.

Improving the patient experience through technology is not limited to new innovations. Over the years, NHGP has also been upgrading its self-help kiosks through ongoing improvement efforts to provide more and better services for patients. First launched in 2013, the self-payment and self-registration kiosks have since evolved to include more user-friendly and time-saving options. Today, they allow patients to register for and book same-day or future appointments; make cashless payments for current and outstanding bills; request for medication home delivery; and update their particulars during or prior to registration for a same-day appointment. Patients who had not updated their particulars in the past one year would be auto-prompted to verify their particulars. This ensures all updated information is captured in the patient management system.

> On average, about 87 per cent of patients make payment via the kiosk or HealthHub.

Improvements to the self-payment kiosk as well as the upgrading of the self-registration kiosk (SRK) to the SRK+ version have added convenience to the patient journey. On average, about 87 per cent of patients make payment via the kiosk or HealthHub, according to Ms Sharon Chen, Director, Operations, NHGP. "The kiosks empower our patients and caregivers with more self-help options so that they can have a more pleasant and seamless experience with reduced waiting time and minimum time spent in the clinic," Ms Chen said. "This reduces the burden of mundane and repetitive tasks on our staff and allows them to focus more time and attention on patients who need assistance."

The self-service kiosk — the latest version of NHGP's self-help kiosk piloted at Kallang Polyclinic — integrates features from the self-registration and self-payment kiosks, enabling patients to perform tasks related to registration and payment at a single kiosk. NHGP will progressively replace all self-payment and self-registration kiosks with the self-service kiosk across its polyclinics.

Ms Hester Tan, Senior Manager, Operations, NHGP, observed that over at Kallang Polyclinic, the introduction of the self-service kiosk did away with patients' need to travel to multiple kiosks for different transactions. "The self-service kiosk is also more compact and sleek as it now uses a thermal printer that is smaller than the typical A4-size printer. With the kiosks occupying less space, the clinic has more space for other purposes such as creating more walkways," she said, noting that it made for greater patient safety and comfort.

Most significantly, patients such as Ms Amrit Kaur greatly appreciate the various facility improvements. "It takes less than a minute to complete the registration process," she said. "Making payment is also a breeze via the kiosk and I do not have to wait for my number to be called. I can say with confidence that there are days where I am in and out of the clinic within 30 minutes." In her view, the kiosk effectively harnesses technology to minimise time spent at the polyclinic, and she is looking forward to more new features.

ENHANCEMENTS TO SELF-HELP KIOSKS

As part of its efforts to streamline the patient experience, NHGP has been carrying out enhancement works to the self-registration and self-payment kiosks over the years.

BENEFITS OF SELF-HELP SERVICES

- The self-registration kiosk has eliminated manual registration for dental patients, benefitting about 95,000 dental patients yearly.
- Consolidated billing within the self-payment kiosk means both medical and dental bills can be paid at the same kiosk, reducing queue times for patients.

ACE'S VALUE-BASED HEALTHCARE CONFERENCE



Two projects by NHGP staff clinched awards at the Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE)'s Value-Based Healthcare (VBHC) conference held on 29 and 30 September 2022.

The project "Enhancing the chronic care model through the use of tele-health services", by Dr Sabrina Wong, Family Physician, Senior Consultant, Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic and Deputy Director, Clinical Services, and her team, won the top three Oral Presentation Award under the category of appropriate utilisation of health technologies.

Another project, "Reducing sedating antihistamine prescriptions for elderly patients with acute upper respiratory tract infection" by Dr Ong Wen Chong, Family Physician, Toa Payoh Polyclinic, and his team, won the top three Poster Presentation Award under the category of applying best evidence to achieve value-driven care.





UNIVERSAL DESIGN EXCELLENCE AWARD BY BCA

Kallang Polyclinic and Long-Term Care Facility was among the four projects that clinched the Universal Design Excellence Award, announced by the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) on 10 November 2022. With a clear focus on person-centered care and eldercare-friendly design principles, Kallang Polyclinic features a Health Studio to raise awareness and promote general health wellness, as well as accessible counters with a hearing enhancement system that allows staff members to better communicate with patients.

NATIONAL HEALTHCARE INNOVATION AND PRODUCTIVITY (HIP) AWARDS 2022

At the National Healthcare Innovation and Productivity (HIP) Awards ceremony, the cross-institutional team involving Dr Elaine Tan, Family Physician, Associate Consultant, NHGP, won the Best Practice Medal under the Care Redesign category for its Diabetic Foot in Primary and Tertiary (DEFINITE) Care programme.

The National HIP Awards were presented at CHI INNOVATE 2022, a thought leadership forum held at Ng Teng Fong Centre for Healthcare Innovation on 4 November 2022. Based on the theme 'The Road from Innovation to Impact', local and overseas healthcare leaders discussed how to deliver better value to the patients and populations we serve via healthcare innovations.



WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY 2022



An origami workshop was conducted on 10 October 2022 by Ms Carol Lin, Senior Psychologist, Kallang Polyclinic, at the Kallang Health Studio in line with World Mental Health Day. The workshop, themed 'MindFOLDness', taught participants how to fold origami mindfully for improved focus, relaxation, memory, patience and hand-eye coordination. Through folding a modular star pattern, participants boosted their awareness of what was happening in the moment and experienced the fun of making something beautiful out of a simple unit.

NHG WORLD DIABETES DAY 2022

Held on 12 November 2022, the NHG World Diabetes Day 2022 webinar aimed to raise awareness on living well with diabetes. In a lively Q&A session with a panel of experts, close to 500 participants learnt how to keep the disease under control by maintaining a healthy diet, regular physical activity, good body weight and going for regular health screenings.

Dr Moses Tan, Family Physician, Deputy Head of Geylang Polyclinic and Organising Co-Chairperson of the webinar, shared about NHGP programmes such as Lighter Life that helps patients with chronic conditions better manage their weight. Other panel speakers from NHGP included Ms Evonne Oh, Nurse Clinician, and Ms Alvernia Chua, Senior Dietitian, both from Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic.



PROFESSOR SIR AZIZ SHEIKH VISITS KALLANG POLYCLINIC



On 11 October 2022, NHGP hosted Professor Sir Aziz Sheikh, Professor of Primary Care Research & Development, and Director of the Usher Institute and Dean of Data, University of Edinburgh (UK), together with researchers from the Family Medicine and Primary Care Department at the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, at Kallang Polyclinic. They were given a tour of the clinic by Dr Valerie Teo, Head of Kallang Polyclinic, and learnt about NHGP's Teamlet Care Model and innovation initiatives such as the *SMART*Vacc system. At the polyclinic's Health Studio, Prof Aziz joined a patient in folding origami at the ongoing exhibition promoting mental well-being.

Assistant Professor Lee Eng Sing, Deputy Director, Clinical Research Unit, led a discussion on possible collaborations regarding Primary Care research with Prof Aziz and the Usher Institute.



SERVICE WITH HEART

Ms Hamnah Rahmat and Ms Parvathy D/O Mariappan, both Patient Service Associates (PSAs) from Woodlands Polyclinic, have seen how care processes in NHG polyclinics have evolved over two decades. Some fundamental things, though, have stayed the same – a commitment to quality care and responsive service, as well as the human touch that puts patients at the heart of healthcare.



Ms Parvathy D/O Mariappan (left) and Ms Hamnah Rahmat
Patient Service Associates, Woodlands Polyclinic

You both have worked 20 years each at NHGP as PSAs. What motivates you to stay on?

Hamnah: Before I joined NHGP, I worked at a bank for 10 years before taking a break to care for my father after he underwent surgery. At the time, I had young children and my husband travelled regularly for work, so when I decided to rejoin the workforce, I looked for a job near my home. What I love about my work is meeting, interacting with, and helping people every day.

Parvathy: I also worked in a bank previously. But because I was juggling many family responsibilities, I wanted a job with more regular hours. Here at NHGP, I feel a true sense of belonging. It has been a stable and rewarding career.

What is a typical day like for you?

Hamnah: As a team leader, I plan the daily roster of the PSAs to ensure that all touchpoints from registration to payment are adequately manned. This will allow the clinic to operate smoothly.

Parvathy: My typical day includes duties such as supporting doctors and nurses in their administrative work, handling patients' appointment scheduling, queue management, and attending to patients' queries.

What inspires you at work? Share a meaningful anecdote.

Hamnah: It is rewarding to know and remember the extent of our role in enhancing the patient experience. When I am out in the community, and patients recognise and acknowledge me, it feels satisfying because it means I have made an impression. It is also heartening when my colleagues share that they are positively impacted by my form of leadership and how I have supported them.

Parvathy: While we are not involved in the clinical work, we make a difference through offering responsive service. Once, while providing frontline services, I prioritised a queuing patient who was experiencing chest pain. The next day, his wife returned to thank me because this simple act meant he was able to be quickly rushed to the emergency department for surgery on a blocked artery.

What have you learnt in your career?

Hamnah: Over the years, I have learnt to understand people and their working styles better. This insight helps me become a better Team Lead and I have honed my people and communication skills to gain my colleagues' trust and cooperation.

Parvathy: It has taught me much about care flows and basic medical knowledge, which I use to assist patients. One thing I've come to realise – especially after the COVID-19 restrictions – is the significance and impact of our face-to-face interactions on patient care. I appreciate that we are able to once again show 'tender loving care' to our patients through our physical presence.

How has the profession changed over the years?

Hamnah: In the past, most paperwork was done manually. Today, there are many digital systems in place. For instance, patients can now pay their bills conveniently through internet banking, AXS, the HealthHub app, or NHGP's self-payment kiosks. Digitalisation has freed up time for us to interact more with patients and handle more meaningful tasks and complex cases.

Parvathy: Over the past 20 years, I have experienced three IT cutovers, and every system change is a new learning curve. Although our scope of work has evolved with technology, the human touch that we offer our patients is no less.