ISSUE 22.2023

National Healthcare Group
POLYCLINICS

Transforming PRIMARY & CARE

UP CLOSE WITH
AN OPERATIONS ASSISTANT SUPERVISOR ON HER ROLE IN NHGP'S NEWEST POLYCLINIC

IN AND AROUND
WONCA WORLD CONFERENCE, SINGAPORE MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE, HEALTHIER SG ROADSHOWS, AND MORE







BUILDING A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

Sembawang Polyclinic officially opens to provide patients and residents with a range of health and social care services.

2023 APEX® AWARDS FOR PUBLICATION EXCELLENCE



WORKING TOGETHER AS ONE PRIMARY CARE

The official opening of Sembawang Polyclinic signals the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics' (NHGP) continuous pursuit of advancing primary care and bettering population health in tandem with Healthier SG.

Read on to learn how NHGP is integrating health and social care to support patients of all ages at its newest polyclinic in our cover story, 'Building a Healthier Community'. In its strategic position within an integrated sports and community hub, Sembawang Polyclinic seeks to empower patients and residents in the area to take ownership of their health and make positive, sustainable lifestyle changes through collaborations with various partners co-located in the hub.

Besides the range of health and social care initiatives aimed at improving health outcomes that have been developed with co-located agencies, several service and facility enhancements have been implemented to help ensure a seamless and efficient patient journey. These efforts underscore NHGP's commitment to the communities and its essential role as a primary care provider.

In *Up Close With*, get an insider's look into the work that went into the setting up of Sembawang Polyclinic. We interview Ms Salama Binte Ahmad, Assistant Supervisor, Operations, who shares how teamwork and a shared mission of care brought the team together in co-creating effective solutions and workflows that enable the new polyclinic to run smoothly. She also provides insight into both frontline and back-end operations by sharing about her job scope.

NHGP will continue to dedicate itself to driving preventive care and health promotion, delivering quality care through patient engagement.

The Editorial Team

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(Left to right) Mr Vikram Nair, MP, Admiralty Division; Prof Philip Choo, Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO), NHG; Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Health; Dr Karen Ng, CEO, NHGP; Dr Irwin Chung, Head, Sembawang Polyclinic, NHGP; and Ms Mariam Jaafar, MP, Woodlands Division, commemorating the official opening of Sembawang Polyclinic.

BUILDING A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

With preventive care becoming a pressing priority in Singapore's healthcare landscape, the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) continues to reinvent itself, driving the transformation of primary care, and pursuing scalable ways to expand accessibility, comprehensiveness and coordination of care.

Sembawang Polyclinic officially opened its doors on 25 November 2023 with an event graced by Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Health. Located within Bukit Canberra, it collaborates with a network of co-located partners to strengthen the ecosystem of support for patients and residents in the area. Providing a range of health and social care services, the polyclinic reinforces NHGP's commitment to deliver quality primary care and improve health outcomes through patient empowerment.

Sembawang Polyclinic is the eighth and newest polyclinic under NHGP, and the first to be situated within an integrated sports and community hub. Its strategic location will enable the forging of strong collaborations and drive tailored services that integrate health and social care, as explained by Dr Karen Ng, Chief Executive Officer of NHGP, in her opening address during the event. "In tandem with Healthier SG, where preventive care is a key focus, our care team supports patients in designing their health plans," she added. "With eight polyclinics rooted in the heartlands, NHGP is committed to strengthening social ties and promoting a sense of community among patients and residents."





Dr Karen Ng, CEO, NHGP, giving her opening address.

> In tandem with Healthier SG, where preventive care is a key focus, our care team supports patients in designing their health plans. With eight polyclinics rooted in the heartlands, NHGP is committed to strengthening social ties and promoting a sense of community among patients and residents.
>
> **Dr Karen Ng**
> Chief Executive Officer, NHGP

STRATEGIC LOCATION TO STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION

One partnership is with Sport Singapore's (SportSG) Active Health Lab located in the vicinity of the polyclinic, whose proximity makes for seamless and convenient referrals. This in turn facilitates exercise prescription, which enables NHGP's care team to help patients develop appropriate exercise goals, and recommend programmes and referrals to the Active Health Lab. At the Lab, Active Health coaches will coach the patients on appropriate lifestyle changes, while NHGP's care team will continue to follow up with the patients on their health status.

Another collaboration is with the National Parks Board (NParks), which will see NHGP working with NParks to co-organise a series of activities, such as planting of herbs and spices at the community garden, and conducting healthy cooking workshops at the Health and Wellness Studio using herbs from the community garden as healthier alternatives to flavour food. From early 2024, NHGP, in collaboration with NParks, will offer mindfulness walks for patients from Sembawang Polyclinic. These walks — which will take place at the therapeutic garden, located at Bukit Canberra — are part of therapeutic horticulture activities to promote the mental well-being of patients. Mindful walking is known to enhance one's mood and reduce psychological distress.

These new initiatives with like-minded partners will augment NHGP's transformative efforts in preventive care and health promotion.

ENHANCED POLYCLINIC FEATURES

Aside from community partnerships, Sembawang Polyclinic is also enhancing the quality and delivery of care through the implementation of several features and facilities. It is the first polyclinic under NHGP to introduce the wheelchair-friendly weighing machine, which will allow those with mobility issues to monitor their weight while seated. This ensures that weight measurements can be done safely and comfortably. Additionally, the Health and Wellness Studio at Sembawang Polyclinic serves as a space to engage and support patients and the community in their adoption of better lifestyle habits. This multi-purpose facility can be utilised for a variety of activities, including group exercise classes and healthy cooking workshops with hands-on participation. Sembawang Polyclinic, together with its co-located partners, will host regular thematic events — promoting mental and social well-being, frailty prevention, disease prevention and healthy living, and maternal and child health among others — at the studio. To further increase outreach and provide value to more patients, the studio boasts built-in video recording and broadcast functions which allow activities in the studio to be live streamed to the clinic waiting areas.



Dancers from Sembawang community dance group, Blossom Seeds giving a rousing performance at the event.

BETTER HEALTH AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

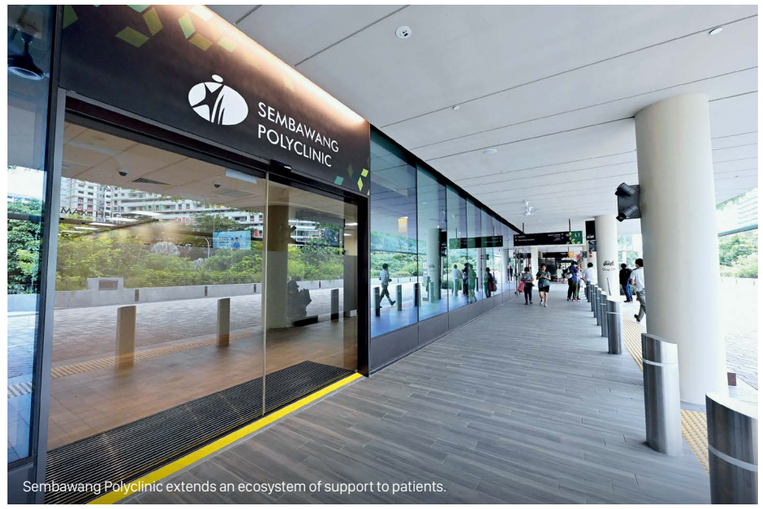
Building upon the relevance and importance of integrated health and social care in improving health outcomes, Sembawang Polyclinic also features the first Family Nexus in the Central and Northern regions of Singapore.

An initiative aligned with the Ministry of Health's Child and Maternal Health and Well-being Strategy, Family Nexus integrates health and social services for the benefit of families and children. It seeks to foster stronger parent-child relationships, help parents gain valuable parenting skills, nurture the emotional development


The polyclinic's Health and Wellness Studio offers hands-on healthy cooking workshops, where participants get to learn healthier cooking methods.



Located within the polyclinic is the first Family Nexus in the Central and Northern regions of Singapore.



Sembawang Polyclinic extends an ecosystem of support to patients.

LOOKING AFTER MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

NHGP's EMBRACE programme, which has been available at all polyclinics under NHGP since 2020, provides holistic and comprehensive intervention to support the good health of mothers and their children. Through integrated maternal and child health services, it aims to strengthen the mother-child dyad during the same visit to the polyclinic. When the child shows up for his or her immunisation or childhood developmental screening appointments, the mother or caregiver will receive nutritional advice and be imparted with parentcraft skills with the help of NHGP nurses. Mothers will also be supported on their breastfeeding journey, be screened for potential postnatal depression symptoms, and receive follow-up care if they have a history of gestational diabetes mellitus.

Further complementing such care provision is EMBRACE^{PLUS}, a component of EMBRACE, that identifies at-risk children aged 0 to 3 years old from low-income families to address their health, social and financial issues. EMBRACE^{PLUS} aims to give the children a good head-start through comprehensive screening and timely intervention to optimise their developmental outcomes, and also provide essential support for mothers.





of children, and provide a supportive network for families through collaborations with partners such as Care Corner Singapore, Families for Life and SportSG. From purposeful play and early literacy activities, to facilitated peer support groups for parents and parent-child workshops, Family Nexus acts as a one-stop health and social services hub that connects patients and residents to relevant resources for their needs. Children from families with medical, social and financial issues will also be linked up with NHGP programmes such as EMBRACE (**E**nhanced **M**aternal **B**aby Toddle**R** **A**nd **C**hild Surv**E**illance)^{PLUS}.

WORKING HAND-IN-HAND

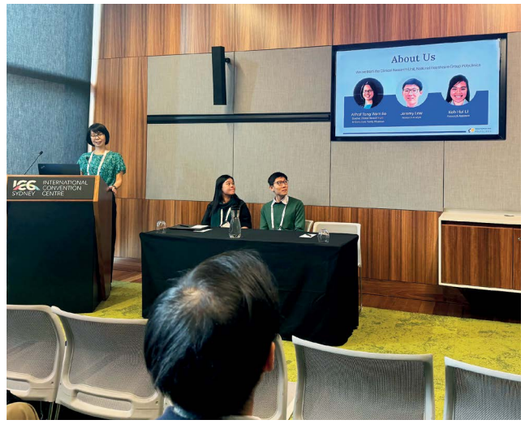
The Patient Advisory Council (PAC) exemplifies the partnership NHGP has built with its patients and their meaningful involvement in advancing the care culture at polyclinics under NHGP. The PAC at Sembawang Polyclinic comprises volunteers, who are NHGP patients and caregivers, co-designing solutions with the clinic management team for a more seamless and efficient health care journey for patients.

At Sembawang Polyclinic, the sense of connection with the community can be seen through the artwork at the clinic's entrance. Created in collaboration with the Muscular Dystrophy Association (Singapore), this community artpiece comprises over a hundred hand-painted hexagonal tiles interwoven with nautical rope.

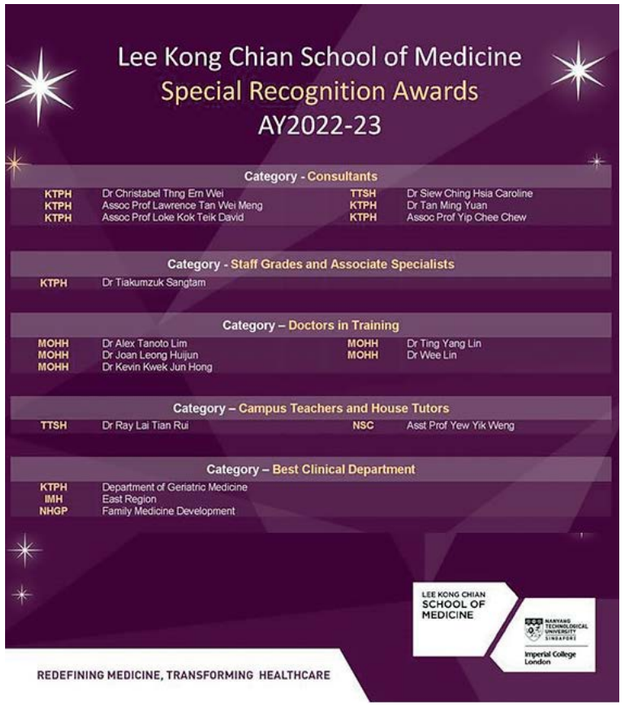
As Dr Ng concluded in her speech, "Each individual strand that is woven together signifies diverse personalities and talents, coming together to build a united community, based on mutual respect and common purpose. The co-creation of this community artpiece demonstrates what can be achieved through collective effort, as NHGP continues to engage residents and patients, deliver excellent care and promote healthy living."

WONCA WORLD CONFERENCE 2023

NHGP participated in the World Organisation of Family Doctors (WONCA) World Conference 2023 held in Sydney from 26 to 29 October 2023. Marking the 50th anniversary of WONCA, the conference served as a useful platform for fellow healthcare practitioners to connect globally on a broad spectrum of topics including adolescent health, mental health, medical education and primary care research. NHGP delegates from multiple disciplines actively took part in scientific poster and rapid impact presentations, skill-building workshops and roundtable discussions. The sessions were helpful in providing insights into enhancing healthcare practices in Singapore.



LKCMEDICINE SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS



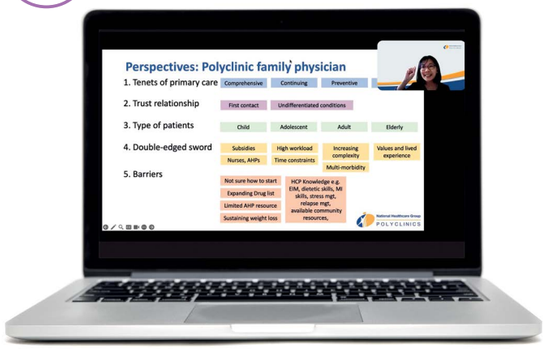
At the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine's (LKCMedicine) Special Recognition Awards AY2022-2023 ceremony held on 22 November 2023, NHGP's Family Medicine Development (FMD) department received the award in the 'Best Clinical Department' category. The awards celebrate individuals and departments that have made outstanding contributions in teaching, research supervision and nurturing the student experience. The FMD team was recognised for their contributions to LKCMedicine's vision of healthcare transformation and medical education.

SINGAPORE MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE 2023

'Mental Wellness in the Silver Years' was one of the focus topics at the Singapore Mental Health Conference 2023, which took place on 4 and 5 October 2023 at Singapore Expo. Dr David Ng, Head, Special Projects (Primary Care), led a breakout session alongside leaders from Fei Yue Community Services and the Agency for Integrated Care's Silver Generation Office. He spoke about NHGP's Memory Clinics and highlighted the significance of primary care in identifying and managing dementia within the community. This session showed how elderly individuals with memory issues and their caregivers could be supported. The conference attracted about 800 attendees from the government, healthcare, social and education sectors.



WEIGHT MANAGEMENT IN DAILY PATIENT CARE



During the College of Family Physicians Singapore's Basic Obesity Management Accreditation (BOMA) course organised on 7 and 8 October 2023, Dr Donna Tan, Deputy Director, Clinical Services, shared NHGP's leading efforts in weight management in primary care. She also provided advice on how to address the challenges of engaging and empowering patients with obesity for effective weight management. The participants, which comprised General Practitioners and Primary Care Physicians, gleaned valuable tips on addressing this complex issue in their daily clinical settings.

HEALTHIER SG ROADSHOWS 2023



NHGP dietitians were actively involved in the Ministry of Health's Healthier SG roadshows — organised islandwide between July to November 2023 — to encourage seniors aged 60 and above to enrol in this national initiative. At the 'Eat Well, Live Well' booth set up at the roadshows in Bishan and Admiralty, Ms Wong Yuefen, Principal Dietitian, Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic; and Ms Alvernia Chua, Senior Dietitian, Sembawang Polyclinic, engaged residents by facilitating interactive activities such as nutrition quizzes. At the roadshow in Toa Payoh, Ms Liow Hui Shi, Senior Dietitian, Woodlands Polyclinic, shared healthy cooking tips with residents.

OVERSEAS DELEGATES' VISITS TO KALLANG POLYCLINIC

On 6 October 2023, NHGP hosted Dr Robert Fields, Executive Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer of Beth Israel Lahey Health, Cambridge, Massachusetts, at Kallang Polyclinic. Dr Ong Kah Pieng, Deputy Head, Kallang Polyclinic, brought Dr Fields on a tour of the polyclinic and food truck, and shared about the polyclinic's self-service initiatives as well as NHGP's Teamlet Care Model. Dr Karen Ng, Chief Executive Officer, NHGP, and the NHGP team had a fruitful discussion with Dr Fields on the provision of holistic primary care services. Dr Fields also visited the Pharmacy to observe the use of robotics such as the Rowa® and blister dispensing machines which reduce medication dispensing errors and increase efficiency.

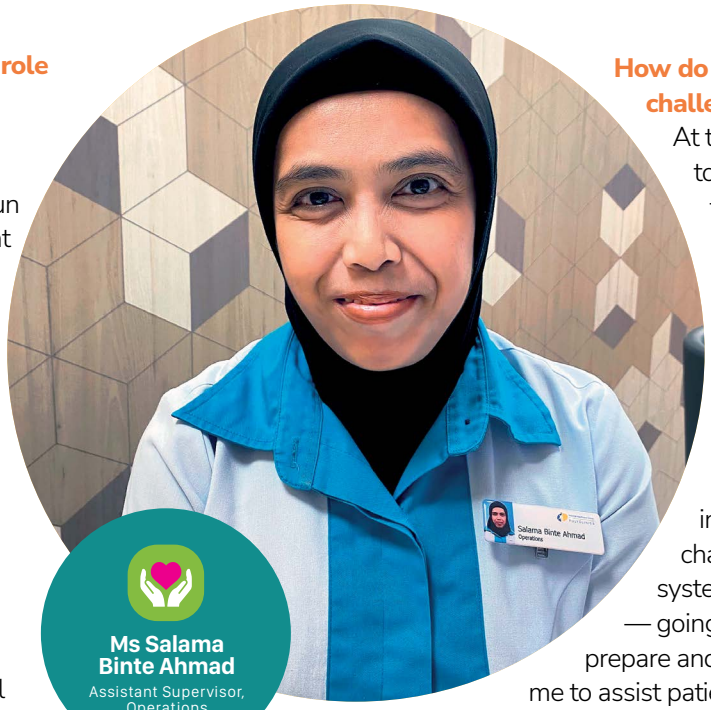


On 20 October 2023, a delegation comprising nursing students from Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha (RIPAS) Hospital, Brunei Darussalam, visited Kallang Polyclinic as part of the Institute of Technical Education's (ITE) Global Education Programme. Ms Chua Wee Khim, Senior Nurse Educator; and Ms Cleo Li Shen, Assistant Nurse Clinician and the clinical instructor at Kallang Polyclinic, showed the delegation around the polyclinic and gave them an overview of NHGP and primary care.



BEHIND THE SCENES AT SEMBAWANG POLYCLINIC

Ms Salama Binte Ahmad, Assistant Supervisor, Operations, shares what it was like to get NHGP's newest polyclinic up and running.



Ms Salama Binte Ahmad
Assistant Supervisor, Operations

What led you to your current role at Sembawang Polyclinic?

I have been with NHGP for over 20 years. I started as a Patient Service Associate (PSA) at Yishun Polyclinic and took on my current role from July 2019. I have a strong interest in the scope and functions of a PSA, as my tertiary education was in office administration, which covers foundational knowledge and skills in customer service.

How do you contribute to the day-to-day operations?

Much of my work includes supervising and supporting my frontline colleagues in functional areas such as the reception area. Besides ensuring compliance with established procedures, I also handle billing matters, finance-related matters, patient and public enquiries, feedback from patients and caregivers, and direct them to resources or other staff who can assist with their needs.

What else does your role involve?

On a typical day, I look after appointment resources and the deployment of staff to meet the daily operational and manpower requirements. This includes monitoring the daily workload and queue status, and initiating appropriate actions when necessary, such as updating the doctor-in-charge when appointment slots are fully booked.

> "My colleagues and I listened to, evaluated, and discussed each idea's pros and cons. Ultimately, this helped us co-create and find the best ways to tackle various problems and develop processes that work.



How do you handle the most challenging parts of the job?

At times, it can be a challenge to address enquiries when the questions go beyond the scope of services provided by NHGP, such as in-depth questions on MediSave withdrawal. I will read up on the topics or check with my reporting officers and colleagues so that I can respond to similar questions in the future. Another challenge is the evolving system and policy changes — going for training helps me to prepare and adapt quickly, allowing me to assist patients adequately.

Share what the preparations for Sembawang Polyclinic's opening entailed.

I did up and collated documents and workflows that enable the polyclinic to operate smoothly. I also prepared the items required for daily usage — such as boxes for cash collection for the counter staff — and ensured that supplies and deliveries were distributed to their rightful place in the clinic. As PSAs now undertake duties in the consultation areas such as assisting doctors in chaperoning patients, I too had to acquire this set of skills.

Were there any hurdles to overcome?

The team for Sembawang Polyclinic's opening comprised many staff from different NHG Polyclinics coming together. Hence, one key challenge we faced was the outpouring of different ideas and multiple proposed solutions when addressing problems. This was when teamwork and an open mindset came into play. My colleagues and I listened to, evaluated, and discussed each idea's pros and cons. Ultimately, this helped us co-create and find the best ways to tackle various problems, and develop processes that work.

How does it feel to be part of the polyclinic's opening and what do you look forward to?

The experience has been exciting and eye-opening. I hope to continue contributing my services and knowledge to those who require it.