ISSUE 24.2024

National Healthcare Group
POLYCLINICS

Transforming PRIMARY & CARE

UP CLOSE WITH
AN NHGP ENRICH LINK WORKER WHO HELPS PATIENTS STAY PHYSICALLY ACTIVE, EMOTIONALLY AND SOCIALLY CONNECTED

IN AND AROUND
WORLD FAMILY DOCTOR DAY 2024, ADVANCING MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH IN PRIMARY CARE, AND MORE



GROWING OUR CAPACITY FOR CARE

The new Khatib Polyclinic offers initiatives to promote preventive health and ageing well

2023 APEX® AWARDS FOR PUBLICATION EXCELLENCE



GROWING OUR CAPACITY FOR CARE

At National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP), our mission is to care for the community in Central and North Singapore by strengthening preventive care, and constantly raising our capacity and capabilities in the primary care sector.

This year, we reinforced our commitment by adding a ninth polyclinic to NHGP's network. Khatib Polyclinic will offer holistic services such as acute primary care, chronic care, preventive care, women and child health services, as well as dental services. Read the cover story, 'A Focus on Living and Ageing Well', to learn about our new polyclinic's range of patient-centred programmes and facilities that will serve the growing healthcare needs of the community in the area. These enhancements make the patient experience safer, more convenient and comfortable.

A strong primary care ecosystem involves collaborating with partners to achieve the best outcomes for patients. Tapping on longstanding engagements with General Practitioners (GPs), NHGP has expanded outreach efforts beyond the polyclinic by extending its RELATE (**REL**ationship-based He**A**lth and Social In**TE**gration) programme to the GPs in NHG's Central-North Primary Care Network (CN-PCN). This supports the GPs in providing holistic assessment and management of patients with complex conditions.

Committed to helping patients in different phases of life, Khatib Polyclinic is piloting the SAFE (**S**creening, **A**gility, **F**railty and Falls prevention, and **E**mpowerment) programme to reduce fall incidence in elderly patients through the identification and intervention of risk factors. The polyclinic is also rolling out mental health care initiatives for adolescents to address their psychosocial and psychosomatic issues, and a social prescription programme called ENRICH (**EN**gaging and empowe**RI**ng our **C**ommunity for better **H**ealth) for older adults.

Delve more into the process of the ENRICH programme with Ms Nicole Kong, ENRICH link worker, in *Up Close With*. She shares how she forges bonds with patients and connects them to recommended activities that aim to enhance their activity, reduce their fall risk, promote social connections and improve their health literacy.

Khatib Polyclinic represents another step forward by NHGP to bring preventive care and patient empowerment closer to those we serve.

The Editorial Team

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(Left to right) Mr Louis Ng, Adviser, Nee Soon East (Nee Soon GRC); Ms Carrie Tan, Adviser, Nee Soon South (Nee Soon GRC); Dr Karen Ng, CEO, NHGP and Chief, Primary Care, NHG; Professor Joe Sim, GCEO, NHG; Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for Social and Family Development, Second Minister for Health; Mr Tan Tee How, Chairman, NHG; Professor Eugene Fidelis Soh, Deputy GCEO (Population Health), NHG; Dr Gabriel Ding, Head, Khatib Polyclinic; Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Minister of State for National Development, Adviser, Nee Soon Central (Nee Soon GRC); and Mr Derrick Goh, Adviser, Nee Soon Link (Nee Soon GRC) at the official opening of Khatib Polyclinic.

A FOCUS ON LIVING AND AGEING WELL

Offering medical as well as dental services, the new Khatib Polyclinic augments the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics' (NHGP) efforts in anchoring care within the community and improving access to primary care services in Central-North Singapore.

Over the years, healthcare has evolved significantly. It has moved upstream with a focus on screening, prevention and patient empowerment. Primary care has been a crucial part of this paradigm shift and in this respect, NHGP has led from the forefront. By expanding services, facilities and capabilities, NHGP has supported residents and patients to live well and age well.

On 13 May 2024, NHGP marked another milestone in this journey of care with the official opening of its ninth polyclinic. Khatib Polyclinic — which will serve some 80,000 residents in the area — is designed to meet the growing healthcare needs of the community by providing quality, person-centred and holistic care, with a strong focus on preventive health.

PROVIDING ACCESS TO DENTAL CARE SERVICES

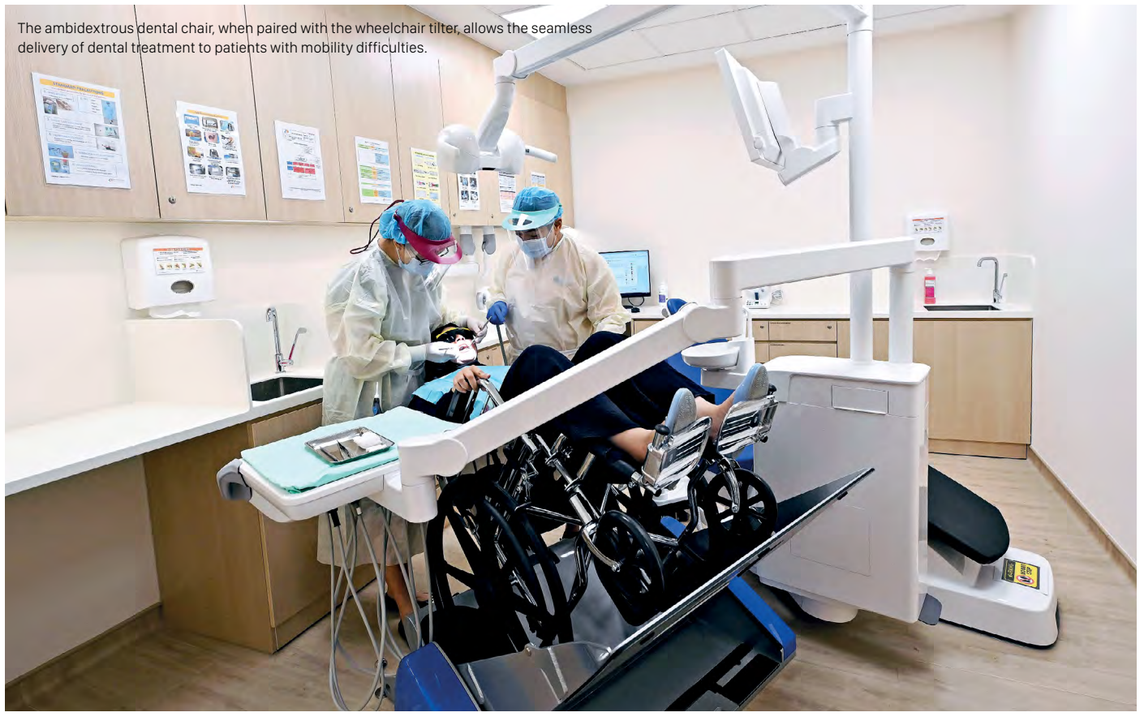
To drive prevention, early diagnosis and timely intervention for dental diseases, the polyclinic's Dental Clinic features comprehensive facilities that cater to the diverse needs of patients. This includes digital in-room X-rays to minimise patient transfer, making treatment more streamlined; and air filtration systems to reduce the risk of infection transmission.





Dr Karen Ng, CEO, NHGP and Chief, Primary Care, NHG, delivering her opening speech.

> Khatib Polyclinic, through strong partnerships with the community, is well-positioned to provide holistic and quality care to residents, from the young to our seniors.
>
> **Dr Karen Ng**
> Chief Executive Officer, NHGP and Chief, Primary Care, NHG


The ambidextrous dental chair, when paired with the wheelchair tilter, allows the seamless delivery of dental treatment to patients with mobility difficulties.

The clinic is also equipped with a wheelchair tilter paired with an ambidextrous dental chair that enables the dental team to deliver care from either a right-handed or left-handed configuration. This set-up provides flexibility in ensuring that patients with impaired movement can comfortably receive care in an optimised treatment position.

PRIORITISING MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

NHGP is also enhancing access to mental health care. Since its launch in October 2012, NHGP's Health and Mind Service (HMS) has been offering mental health care services to patients aged 18 and above who have mild, moderate or moderately-severe mental health issues. From April 2023, NHGP expanded such services to youths aged 13 to 17 with its **A**do**L**escent **E**valuation and **R**apid **T**reatment of Mental Health (ALERT) programme. The programme — which is a collaboration with the Institute of Mental Health — aims to proactively identify and provide care for youths with mental health issues.

CREATING BETTER CARE EXPERIENCES

SELF-HELP BLOOD PRESSURE STATIONS

The Self-Help Blood Pressure (SHBP) Stations at Khatib Polyclinic empower patients to conveniently measure their blood pressure prior to consultation with the NHGP care team. Installed with adjustable tablet mounts, the SHBP Stations enable readings to be automatically transmitted into patient records and readily made available for the consultation.



The Self-Help Blood Pressure Station can automatically transmit patients' readings into the patient records and be readily made available for their consultation.

COMMUNITY PLAZA AND HEALTH STUDIO

The Community Plaza and Health Studio at Khatib Polyclinic serve as dedicated community spaces to support the engagement, empowerment and activation of patients and residents of all ages towards adopting practical healthy lifestyle habits. These may include healthy cooking workshops, interactive exercise programmes, talks on mental health and stress management, frailty and fall prevention, and other health promotion activities. Activities in the Health Studio are also live-streamed to the polyclinic waiting areas for viewing. Located adjacent to each other, the Community Plaza and Health Studio facilitate Khatib Polyclinic's efforts in promoting healthier lives.


Activities organised at the Community Plaza and Health Studio promote healthier lifestyle choices.

PATIENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Comprising patient volunteers from both Khatib and Yishun Polyclinics, the Patient Advisory Council (PAC) at Khatib Polyclinic co-creates and co-designs solutions to improve the patient care journey, together with the clinic management team. As a common platform for knowledge-sharing and capacity-building, the PAC has provided valuable insights to better meet patients' health needs.

Family Physicians will opportunistically screen for warning signs of psychosocial issues and activate Medical Social Workers (MSWs) who will provide risk assessments, counselling and tailored case management to address the biological, psychological and social factors surrounding the mental health struggles of identified patients. This close collaboration between the doctors and MSWs is bolstered by actively engaging family and social support systems, as MSWs may refer patients to a network of health professionals, social service agencies or school counsellors, depending on the severity and complexity of the issues. This fosters a supportive recovery environment and ensures continuity of care beyond the clinic setting.

Over and above being vigilant for symptoms indicative of anxiety or depression, clinicians will also pay more attention to youths who seek medical attention for psychosomatic symptoms such as recurrent headaches, abdominal pain and chest pain, under the **RE**silience in **C**hildren and **A**dolescents with **P**sychosomatic Symptoms (RECAP@NHGP) programme. 'Psychosomatic' refers to physical symptoms that are caused or worsened by a mental factor. The programme is a collaboration with KK Women's and Children's Hospital, and will similarly target youths between 13 to 17 years old. RECAP@NHGP seeks to help those affected understand the mind-body link and gain skills to manage emotional distress. It will be piloted in 2025, and eventually rolled out to all polyclinics under NHGP to empower youths with healthy coping strategies through psychoeducation and counselling.

KEEPING SENIORS ACTIVE AND WELL

On the other end of the age spectrum, Khatib Polyclinic will support efforts towards helping seniors stay physically, socially and mentally active. In line with the national Age Well SG initiative, the polyclinic has engaged Active Ageing Centres (AACs) in its vicinity — such as Goodlife Studio (Yishun) and SASCO @Khatib (Singapore Amalgamated Services Co-operative Organisation)



NHGP programmes such as ENRICH encourage health ownership and connect patients to community resources for social and lifestyle interventions.

— and connected patients to the AACs' suite of programmes, through NHGP's ENRICH (**EN**gaging and empowe**RI**ng our **C**ommunity for better **H**ealth) initiative.

First piloted at Kallang Polyclinic in November 2023, ENRICH connects patients 50 years old and above — who are well and with stable chronic conditions — to community assets to boost physical and emotional well-being. They are supported and guided by their clinical team, who will provide personalised recommendations for activities based on their health, medical conditions, fitness level and ambulatory needs. These include exercise programmes which aim to improve flexibility, balance and strength to reduce fall risk; social activities to prevent isolation and promote social connections; and health education and mental wellness programmes that empower seniors to make informed decisions about their health. The patients will also be encouraged to use apps such as NHG Cares and Healthy 365 to enrol in health and social programmes, and achieve their goals.

Activities held at the Health Studio include healthy cooking workshops, talks on mental health and stress management, frailty and fall prevention, and other health promotion activities.





(Left to right) Associate Professor Chong Phui-Nah, Senior Advisor, NHG; Professor Eugene Fidelis Soh, Deputy GCEO (Population Health), NHG; Mr Derrick Goh, Adviser, Nee Soon Link (Nee Soon GRC); Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Minister of State for National Development, Adviser, Nee Soon Central (Nee Soon GRC); Professor Joe Sim, GCEO, NHG; Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for Social and Family Development, Second Minister for Health; Mr Tan Tee How, Chairman, NHG; Dr Karen Ng, CEO, NHGP and Chief, Primary Care, NHG; Ms Carrie Tan, Adviser, Nee Soon South (Nee Soon GRC); Mr Louis Ng, Adviser, Nee Soon East (Nee Soon GRC); and Dr Gabriel Ding, Head, Khatib Polyclinic, in front of Khatib Polyclinic's community artpiece, *Building Blocks for Good Health*.

More will be done in the area of fall prevention, which is a prevalent concern among older adults. Khatib Polyclinic is the first polyclinic under NHGP to pilot the SAFE (**S**creening, **A**gility, **F**railty and Falls prevention, and **E**mpowerment) programme, which started on 13 May 2024. A multidisciplinary care team of NHGP doctors, Care Managers, Advanced Practice Nurses and Care Coordinators will screen all patients aged 65 years and above for falls in the past six months. Those with a history of falls will be identified for SAFE. Apart from providing appropriate interventions to reduce frailty progression and fall risk, improve bone health and minimise falls, the care team can identify fallers at risk of osteoporosis and offer them Bone Mineral Densitometry (BMD) screening. The SAFE programme also sees the care team partnering physiotherapists at St Luke's Eldercare (SLEC) Nee Soon Central Centre, to refer patients to the SLEC Day Rehabilitation Centre.

FORGING STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS WITH GPs

General Practitioners (GPs) are an intrinsic part of the primary care ecosystem. To enhance collaboration with GPs and raise the level of care in the community, NHGP has extended its RELATE (**REL**ationship-based He**A**lth and Social In**TE**gration) programme currently available at all polyclinics under NHGP to GP clinics within the Central-North Primary Care Network (CN-PCN) from May 2024.

RELATE recognises that unmet psychosocial and behavioural needs such as social isolation and mobility difficulties affect an individual's well-being, and aims to manage patients with these complex needs. Through RELATE, GPs in CN-PCN can holistically assess patients for health and social challenges in addition to their medical issues, and connect patients with NHG Community Health Teams (CHTs) through the CN-PCN primary care coordinator. The CHT nurse — as the single point of contact for the patients — will help them navigate between their GPs and community partners, and aid them in accessing community resources such as exercise and wellness programmes.

NHGP programmes such as RELATE, ENRICH and SAFE address the cross-spectrum of population health needs, in collaboration with community partners. Dr Karen Ng, Chief Executive Officer, NHGP and Chief, Primary Care, NHG, summed it up in her opening speech: "Khatib Polyclinic, through strong partnerships with the community, is well-positioned to provide holistic and quality care to residents, from the young to our seniors."

WORLD FAMILY DOCTOR DAY 2024



Led by Dr Karen Ng, Chief Executive Officer, NHGP and Chief, Primary Care, NHG, a group of NHGP Family Physicians attended the World Family Doctor Day dinner on 11 May 2024. Several NHGP recipients were presented with distinguished teaching awards by the College of Family Physicians Singapore for their contributions towards the advancement of Family Medicine. Held annually on 19 May, World Family Doctor Day is an occasion to acknowledge and celebrate the impact of family doctors in healthcare systems worldwide.

Award	Name and Designation
Distinguished Educators' Award	**Dr Lee Biing Ming Simon** Family Physician, Consultant Chief Operating Officer Chief Clinical Informatics Officer & Data Protection Officer **Dr Ng Wei Liang David** Family Physician, Senior Consultant Head, Special Projects (Primary Care) Deputy Director, Clinical Services
College Teachers' Award	**Dr Chua Yu Cong Eugene** Family Physician, Associate Consultant Hougang Polyclinic
Institution Award - FCFP(S)	**A/Prof Richard Lee Meng Kam** Family Physician, Senior Consultant Assistant Director, Family Medicine Development

ADVANCING MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH IN PRIMARY CARE

The results of a milestone study titled 'Prevalence and risk factors of depression and anxiety in primary care' — conducted by NHGP in collaboration with the Institute of Mental Health — was published in the *Annals*, the medical journal of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore, on 10 May 2024. The study reported that out of 3,505 respondents who were patients in NHG Polyclinics, the overall prevalence of clinical depression was 8.7% while that of anxiety was 7.3%. 5.4% of respondents — most being between 21 to 39 years old — had both depression and anxiety. The research attracted media coverage. In his media interview, Principal Investigator, Dr Eugene Chua, Family Physician, Associate Consultant, NHGP, cited stressors such as finances, work issues and having to care for both young children and elderly parents, as possible reasons for the higher prevalence of depression and anxiety among younger adults.



CENTRAL-NORTH PRIMARY CARE NETWORK (CN-PCN) QUARTERLY MEETING

NHG's Central-North Primary Care Network (CN-PCN) and Primary Care Academy organised the first symposium on Diabetic Foot during CN-PCN's Quarterly Meeting on 4 May 2024. The CN-PCN General Practitioners (GPs) heard from the panel speakers, which included Dr Elaine Tan, Family Physician, Associate Consultant, Toa Payoh Polyclinic; and Ms Radiance Fong, Senior Podiatrist, Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic, on how to deliver better patient care. CN-PCN's second Quarterly Meeting of the year came to a close with the sharing by Dr Valerie Teo, Head, Kallang Polyclinic, on NHGP's RELationship-based HeAlth and Social InTEgration (RELATE) programme. GPs learned how they would be supported in identifying patients with social and health challenges through RELATE. They were also informed on how they could be assisted by CN-PCN Primary Care Coordinators in referring patients to NHG Community Health Teams.



PROMOTING HEALTH AT SPORTS FESTIVAL @ BUKIT CANBERRA



Sembawang Polyclinic participated in ActiveSG's Sports Festival on 27 April 2024 as one of the pit-stops that teams had to navigate through in a race-like challenge. Sembawang Polyclinic's pit-stop involved arranging beverages based on their sugar content which raised awareness of healthier drinks. The Family Nexus @ Bukit Canberra team also garnered valuable insights on the value of family dynamics in parenting through a survey for parents to complete. Over 1,200 families attended the Sports Festival, which was graced by Minister for Health, Mr Ong Ye Kung as Guest-of-Honour.

PARENT-CHILD WORKSHOP AT SEMBAWANG POLYCLINIC

NHGP Health Promotion and Preventive Care Department organised their first event collaboration, 'Bonding with Wellness', with Sport Singapore (SportSG) at Sembawang Polyclinic's Health and Wellness Studio on 12 March 2024. The parent-child workshop comprised a yoga session by SportSG and a hand puppet-making and healthy yoghurt parfait making session conducted by Ms Yeo Hui Wen, Health Promotion Consultant, HPPC. The event enabled parents and their children to bond through healthy living activities.



ENRICHING LIVES BY CONNECTING PATIENTS TO THE COMMUNITY

NHGP ENRICH (**EN**gaging and empowe**RI**ng our **C**ommunity for better **H**ealth) link worker, Ms Nicole Kong supports patients to achieve greater social, emotional and physical wellness by helping them build bonds and find their place in the community.



Ms Nicole Kong
ENRICH link worker, NHGP

What led you to become an ENRICH link worker?

Healthcare has always been close to my heart; I previously worked as an allied health professional and my motivation to become an ENRICH link worker came from my observation that my own elderly parents had reduced social interactions with others, especially post-pandemic. Hence, I empathise deeply with a person's need for social connection and physical activities. This role allows me to extend support to those in similar situations.

What are some required strengths and skills for your role?

Active listening is crucial in allowing me to fully understand and empathise with patients' concerns. Adaptable communication is another key skill — I need to adjust my conversation speed and tone to meet their needs, ensuring they feel comfortable. Additionally, I use appropriate question techniques to give patients the chance to express their needs and preferences more openly. It is also important to align closely with medical professionals' concerns for patients through focused and timely discussions. This includes regularly updating the doctors with crucial information about their patients.

What does your job scope entail?

My daily responsibilities involve connecting patients who are well and have stable chronic conditions to suitable community programmes, based on the recommendations of the NHGP clinical team. These recommendations are personalised according to one's health, medical conditions, fitness level and mobility. Patients are also encouraged to use online resources such as the Health Kampung on the NHG Cares app or the Healthy 365 app.

> "Active listening is crucial in allowing me to fully understand and empathise with patients' concerns.



I further assist patients through phone calls and follow-ups to address their concerns and feedback on these activities. The goal is to help them find, and participate in programmes that can enhance their wellness. This can be in the form of exercise, in order to be more active and reduce their fall risk; or social activities such as volunteering for befriending services that prevent social isolation.

Share an experience where you supported a patient towards their goals.

One memorable instance was with a retired chef, whose attending doctor encouraged him to take part in this social prescription programme. We enrolled the patient in ENRICH, but I noticed that he was initially rather quiet. After finding out that it was because he lacked confidence in speaking English, I reassured him that the Active Ageing Centres welcome a diverse group of people speaking multiple languages. He soon became more comfortable in interacting with others. Over time, he reported an improvement in his energy levels and physical flexibility, and expressed gratitude for our support, which gave me a great sense of satisfaction.

What do you find most rewarding about this role?

I feel gratified when I witness patients making progress and experiencing improvements to their health and well-being. I also enjoy talking to them because I gain valuable insights from their life experiences.

What new skills, perspectives or lessons have you picked up in your work?

Through my work, I have developed the ability to assess and efficiently address patients' non-medical needs through offering social and emotional support. Besides enhancing my communication skills and improving collaborations with community partners and healthcare providers, I have gained more knowledge about the available local community resources that can be leveraged to improve one's well-being. I have also learned to advocate for patients' needs, and how to empower them to make better lifestyle changes.