

MEDIA RELEASE

ANG MO KIO POLYCLINIC EMPOWERS INDIVIDUALS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM TO GREATER INDEPENDENCE THROUGH CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAMME

Equipping Pathlight School students with life readiness skills to access primary healthcare services in the community

Singapore, 16 May 2023 – Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic, one of the seven polyclinics managed by the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP), has established a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) outreach programme with Pathlight School, an autism-focused school that caters to students on the autism spectrum. This collaboration draws on the different areas of expertise of Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic’s staff to equip Pathlight students with life readiness skills to access primary healthcare services in the community.

2 In 2016, the team from Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic conducted health education sessions for Pathlight School as part of their Daily Living Skills lessons. These sessions, held at Pathlight School, covered the importance of hand and dental hygiene and proper handwashing and teeth-brushing techniques as well as one-on-one hands-on-activities for students to put what they have learned into practice. The team also conducted healthy eating talks to help students understand the importance of having a healthy diet.

3 Seeing that individuals on the autism spectrum and their caregivers sometimes encountered challenges navigating the polyclinic’s services, Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic and Pathlight School developed its first learning journey in 2019 for the school’s Vocational Track Year 4 and 5 students to learn about the different facilities available in the polyclinic. To help the students get closer to the real world context, the teachers brought learning out of the classroom and simulated a patient journey in the polyclinic to illustrate what would take place during a doctor visit. Through the process and learning journeys to the polyclinic, students were taught to be more independent.

4 When physical learning journeys for the students could not be conducted due to COVID-19 safe management measures in 2020, this challenge spurred the teams to explore new avenues for continued engagement. Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic and Pathlight School produced its first series of step-by-step training videos – *Use of Healthcare Services (refer to Annex A)* for Pathlight School’s e-learning platform, *Learn for Life eCAMPUS*. The videos aim to educate students on what to expect when going to the polyclinic – from registering to seeing the doctor and making payment for the visit. These e-learning materials, designed with input from Pathlight School teachers, enabled students to continue learning about accessing primary healthcare services in the community independently. The videos also helped caregivers to reinforce the learning at their own time.

5 Ageing affects everyone including caregivers. Among caregivers’ greatest concerns for their family members with special needs, such as autism, is whether they will be able to manage themselves independently and the future care arrangement when the caregivers are

no longer around. “Empowering people on the autism spectrum with the knowledge and skills to access healthcare independently gives them an opportunity to be active participants in their own care and respects their rights. It also gives caregivers peace of mind that their children will be taken care of by healthcare workers who respect them and are able to understand and communicate with them,” said Dr Dominique Phang, Family Physician, Senior Staff, Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic and Programme Lead for Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic-Pathlight School CSR programme.

6 Ms Linda Kho, Principal of Pathlight School, said: “We are grateful for the support and commitment from NHGP’s Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic team in embracing autism and helping our students integrate into the community. The partnership has enabled us to bring teaching and learning beyond the classroom into the community and provide authentic learning opportunities for our students to build their life readiness skills. This is part of the School’s holistic curriculum, together with academics and other 21st century competencies, to ensure that our students are better prepared for life.”

7 To date, more than 100 Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic staff have participated in autism awareness talks delivered by Autism Resource Centre (Singapore), a not-for-profit charity that established Pathlight School, and learned skills such as autism-friendly strategies to support individuals on the autism spectrum. Through these learning opportunities, Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic staff are more confident in communicating with these individuals before, during and after consultation.

8 The on-site learning journey at Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic for Pathlight School students has resumed in April 2023 (refer to Annex B). The step-by-step training videos are still available on Pathlight School’s learning portal for students and caregivers to access at their own time. It will be shared with the rest of the six National Healthcare Group Polyclinics to increase awareness on autism and educate staff on managing and communicating with individuals on the autism spectrum.

9 “Equipping our staff with the right skillset to adopt different methods of communication when supporting individuals with special needs is just as important as helping caregivers to plan ahead for their future clinic visits and smoothening their transfer to the next care provider,” added Dr Phang.

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About National Healthcare Group Polyclinics

National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) forms the primary healthcare arm of the National Healthcare Group (NHG). Its seven polyclinics serve a significant proportion of the population in the central and northern regions of Singapore.

NHGP provides a comprehensive range of health services for the family, functioning as a one-stop health service centre providing treatment for acute medical conditions, management of chronic diseases, women & children services and dental care. The focus of NHGP’s care is on health promotion and disease prevention, early and accurate diagnosis, disease management through physician led team-based care as well as enhancing the capability of Family Medicine through research and teaching.

Through the Family Medicine Academy and the NHG Family Medicine Residency Programme, NHGP plays an integral role in the delivery of primary care training at medical undergraduate and post-graduate levels. With the Primary Care Academy, NHGP provides training to caregivers and other primary care counterparts in the community sector.

More information is available at www.nhgp.com.sg.

ANNEX A

Use of Healthcare Services video

Videos	Learning Points
Consultation with a Doctor/Nurse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Step-by-step procedures when visiting a polyclinic (i.e. making an appointment, registering at the clinic, pre-check processes such as temperature taking, blood pressure measurement etc.)• Share symptoms and answer doctor's questions accurately when asked• Follow doctor's/nurse's instructions when the doctor/nurse is performing a physical health check (e.g. temperature taking, throat and mouth check using flashlight and tongue depressor, chest and breathing using a stethoscope)
Doing Blood Tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Step-by-step procedures when drawing blood• Dos' during the procedure (e.g. relax muscles and stay still until the procedure is completed and follow instructions)
Getting an Injection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Step-by-step procedures of a vaccination• Dos' during the procedure (e.g. follow instructions and answer questions accordingly)
Collecting Medication from the Pharmacist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check identifiers before medication is dispensed.• Dos' during medication collection (e.g. listen to staff explain prescription)

ANNEX B

A typical polyclinic on-site learning journey:

Station	Activity
Registration Counter	Students are taught how to register for their visit. At this station, Patient Service Associate shows students how to use the identification card for registration.
Nurse's station	Nurses explain the importance of keeping checks of one's weight and blood pressure and why the doctor would need to know these vital statistics at each visit. Here, students will learn the process from measuring height to weight and blood pressure.
X-Ray	X-Ray technician shares simple information about X-ray and the sequence of taking an X-ray. To give students an authentic experience, they get to simulate doing one to two poses to understand how they should position themselves to take an X-ray.
Lab	Lab technician shares the process of drawing blood. To illustrate how blood is drawn, a dummy hand is used. Students can also try out through a simulation of drawing blood process without using the real needles.
Dental	Dentist shares simple information about oral health and what happens during a dental visit. Students also get to try out the dental chair as part of the overall learning experience.