

MEDIA RELEASE

INAUGURAL PRIMARY CARE CONFERENCE AIMS TO CREATE BETTER HEALTHCARE FOR PATIENTS

Transforming primary care health practices through innovation

Singapore, 1 March 2023 – The first Singapore Primary Care Conference (SPCC) 2023 will bring together primary care physicians in Singapore, to exchange ideas and share knowledge on topics relevant to primary care practice, now and in the future. Themed ‘Strength in Unity: New Frontiers in Primary Care’, the conference will focus on how the primary care providers have emerged stronger after the COVID-19 pandemic, to transform and build a more robust, responsive and sustainable healthcare systems for the population.

The Conference, co-organised by the College of Family Physicians Singapore, National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP), National University Polyclinics and SingHealth Polyclinics will be opened by Guest-of-Honour, Professor Chee Yam Cheng, President, Singapore Medical Council and Chairman, National General Practitioner Advisory Panel.

2 “Primary care is the cornerstone of every healthcare system, and more than ever, this was demonstrated in how Singapore handled the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as primary care contributed tremendously to stem the tide of COVID-19, we are well placed to address the challenges ahead with our ageing population. The conference aims to bring together all healthcare professionals, to share ideas, network and create solutions for the health needs of our nation.” Adjunct Associate Professor Tan Tze Lee, President, College of Family Physicians Singapore, and Co-Chair, Organising Committee, Singapore Primary Care Conference 2023.

3 “During COVID-19, primary care providers came together to support each other in providing care for the patients. This was made possible through the strong relationships and collaborations in the primary care community. Post-pandemic, we must continue to build up primary care and preventive health as the foundation of our healthcare system to better serve our patients and the community. The NHGP Teamlet Care Model is one such example where patients are always seen by the same care team, with improved care continuity, comprehensiveness and integration of care. We hope the conference will provide an opportunity for the primary care professionals to upskill, network and learn the best practices in creating a robust and sustainable healthcare system,” Associate Professor Chong Phui-Nah, Chief Executive Officer, NHGP and Primary Care, and Co-Chair, Organising Committee, Singapore Primary Care Conference 2023.

SPCC 2023 Highlights

4 To be held at Raffles City Convention Centre from 3 to 4 March 2023, the hybrid conference will be attended by over 700 participants from the healthcare industry. The event will consist of four plenary sessions, five symposiums, pre-conference workshops, and a polyclinic learning visit where General Practitioners can experience and gain further insights into the multidisciplinary team-based approach by polyclinics to provide care to patients. The conference will also feature a line-up of healthcare experts from Singapore and overseas, who will share care models of the future, innovation and technology in primary care, and latest clinical updates on common conditions encountered in the primary care setting.

5 The first plenary and discussion on 'New Frontiers of Family Medicine: Transforming for Population Health' will feature Dr Andrew Bazemore, Senior Vice President of Research and Policy, American Board of Family Medicine; Co-Director, Center for Professionalism & Value in Healthcare, United States, and A/Prof Chong Phui-Nah, Chief Executive Officer, National Healthcare Group Polyclinics & Primary Care. Dr Bazemore will be sharing his research findings that have demonstrated the effectiveness of key primary care tenets such as continuity and comprehensiveness and how they contribute meaningfully to population health measures of care quality and value. Besides research, Dr Bazemore is also a leading thought expert in matters relating to primary care workforce development, promotion of academic family medicine and primary care financing policy.

The other key plenary sessions and symposiums will centre on:

Transforming Primary Care with Innovation

6 In preparation for an ageing population, different areas of innovation can be applied to primary care to help improve the lives of Singaporeans. One key area is big data which can be analysed to provide meaningful and predictive information for operational, clinical and population health planning needs. Other innovations include Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its use in the medical field, as well as the use of genomic data to ensure appropriate personalised management and quality of care for patients.

Playing a Larger Role under Healthier SG

7 Family Medicine will be the foundation in Primary Care to drive success in the Healthier SG programme. Three family physicians namely Dr Valerie Teo, Family Physician, Consultant, Head, Kallang Polyclinic, Dr Richard Hui, Family Physician, Senior Consultant, National University Polyclinics, and Director, Primary Care Partnerships, Regional Health Systems Office, National University Health System, and Dr Hu Pei Lin, Family Physician, Consultant, Clinic Director, Marine Parade Polyclinic, SingHealth Polyclinics, will share how their family medicine background has shaped their practice and helped them in designing their programmes to provide holistic care to meet the needs and challenges of the population.

8 Besides helping patients to develop a culture of health ownership through preventive care and chronic disease management, family physicians can effectively deploy social prescribing to connect patients to various communities for a healthier lifestyle. The strong relationship between family physicians, their patients as well as other supporting partners will play a central role in the success of Healthier SG.

Encouraging Research Collaboration and Recognising Quality Research Work

9 A key component of the conference is the research competition which aims to showcase and recognise the research work done by primary care healthcare professionals. Among the abstracts shortlisted for oral presentations on the event day are, 1) Depression in Primary Care: Prevalence and its Associated Factors; 2) Healthcare Providers' experiences when advising on breast cancer screening mammography; and 3) Patients' perspectives on GP networks providing diabetes care in Singapore. For more information, please refer to Annex A.

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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

About National University Polyclinics

The National University Polyclinics (NUP) is a member of the National University Health System (NUHS), a leading academic health system and one of three public healthcare clusters in Singapore.

NUP provides primary care treatment for acute illnesses, management of chronic diseases, women and children health services, and dental care at its network of polyclinics at Bukit Batok, Bukit Panjang, Choa Chu Kang, Clementi, Jurong, Pioneer, and Queenstown (with Taman Jurong, Tengah and Yew Tee to come).

As part of an integrated academic health system, NUP collaborates with the hospitals and national specialty centres within NUHS as well as partners in the community, such as general practitioners, grassroots, and social care agencies, to provide patient-centred care for the population.

For more information, please visit www.nup.com.sg

About SingHealth Polyclinics

SingHealth Polyclinics (SHP) comprises a network of nine polyclinics that provides primary healthcare services and plays an integral role in empowering patients, their families and communities to take charge of their health and wellness. SHP practises Family Medicine, providing seamless, patient-centred treatment and preventive healthcare that is affordable and accessible to all through its network of polyclinics.

SingHealth Polyclinics is a member of Singapore Health Services (SingHealth) – an Academic Medical Centre offering over 40 clinical specialties through a network of acute hospitals, national specialty centres, community hospitals and polyclinics.

For more information, please visit <https://polyclinic.singhealth.com.sg/>

ANNEX A: ABSTRACTS FOR RESEARCH COMPETITION (ORAL PRESENTATIONS)

Patients' perspectives on GP networks providing diabetes care in Singapore, presented by Dr Goh Lay Hoon, Senior Consultant, Department of Family Medicine, National University Health System

The research aims to explore patients' perspectives on the role of General Practitioner (GP) Primary Care Networks (PCN) in diabetes care. The PCN is a new primary care model in Singapore alongside public polyclinics and non-PCN GPs. Understanding and addressing gaps identified by patients will enable care to be improved. Although patients received affordable government-subsidised care, there were concerns about rising costs of medications and follow-up tests. The PCN GPs were able to deliver patient-centred care that was continuous, holistic and based on trust and rapport. Access to the clinics was convenient with acceptable waiting time. While there were additional services at the clinics such as counselling on diet and exercise, diabetic retinal and foot screenings provided by nurses; and care coordination by care coordinators, the limited clinic space affected the availability of nurses for same day service. There are opportunities for the PCN GPs to work with polyclinics to care for patients through the sharing of electronic medical records and providing subsidised medications to the GP clinics.

Depression in Primary Care: Prevalence and its Associated Factors, presented by Dr Eugene Chua, Family Physician, Associate Consultant, National Healthcare Group Polyclinics

The Singapore Mental Health Study (2016) showed that Major Depressive Disorder had the highest lifetime prevalence of 6.3%, compared to other mental health conditions. While the COVID-19 Mental Wellness Taskforce Report (2020) indicated that majority of respondents would seek help from primary care physicians for emotional or psychological problems, there is a paucity of findings on the prevalence of depression in primary care. This study aims to determine the prevalence of depression in the primary care population and identify the patient characteristics associated with it. The prevalence of significant clinical depression in this study is 8.8%. It is concerning that the youngest age group reported the highest prevalence of depression. It is recommended that the community supportive measures addressing clinical depression in young adults, National Servicemen and women be readily accessible.

Healthcare Providers' experiences when advising on breast cancer screening mammography, presented by Mdm Wang Xuefei, Advanced Practice Nurse (Nurse Clinician), SingHealth Polyclinics

Mammography is currently considered the best screening tool for breast cancer with a reduction in breast cancer related deaths. Although Singapore is the first Asian country to set up a nationwide breast screen programme, its uptake of breast cancer screening pales in comparison to Western countries. This study aims to explore the experiences of healthcare providers (HCPs) when they advise women on breast cancer screening via mammography in Singapore. The results are grouped into four main domains. The HCPs' attribute factors such as gender, personal experience and their confidence level that would influence their practice. Communication barriers, women's negative experience, belief, misconception and their awareness affect the interaction between HCPs and the women. Cost, accessibility, consultation time constraint and inadequate information are factors that would hinder HCPs in the health system. The risks and limitations of mammography is a consideration for HCPs when advising women on breast cancer screening as well.