

# Two hospitals team up to deal with acute injuries

Trauma surgeons will shuttle between TTSH and upcoming Sengkang General as needed

Linette Lai

Two public hospitals are working together to optimise care for patients with severe traumatic injuries.

The collaboration between Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) and the upcoming Sengkang General Hospital will involve TTSH trauma surgeons shuttling between both hospitals when needed. Some Sengkang doctors have also been doing stints at TTSH's emergency department.

The aim is to help doctors at Sengkang General Hospital, which opens later this year, get up to speed on the demands of acute emergency treatment.

They are also working out protocols on where patients in the central and north-east regions should be sent in the event of a critical emergency. For example, someone with severe injuries involving multiple organs who would subsequently require help from a trauma psychiatrist could be sent to the more established department at TTSH.

The collaboration was announced at the two-day Singapore Trauma and Acute Care Conference, which started yesterday at Raffles City Convention Centre.

Dr Teo Li Tserng, chief of trauma and acute care surgery at TTSH, said: "Regional trauma systems, where resources are optimised by managing severely injured trauma patients in higher-resourced hospitals, have been shown to reduce

death and disability due to injury in the populations under their care."

His team is also training their counterparts at Sengkang General Hospital. They are stationed at Alexandra Hospital, which does not have a full-fledged emergency department. They move into their new premises in Sengkang later this year.

"The shared expertise and resources achieved from the collaboration will enhance the efficiency of care delivery as Sengkang continues to develop its trauma services in preparation for the hospital's opening," said Dr Kam Juinn Huar, a consultant from Sengkang General Hospital's surgery department.

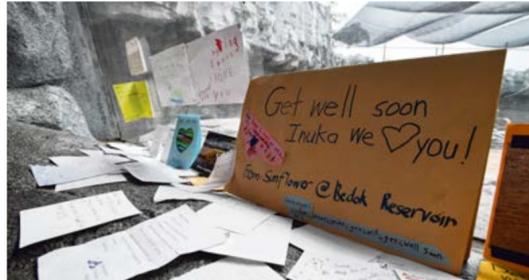
Traumatic injuries are the fifth-highest cause of death here, with most of the serious cases involving people over age 65. Many incidents involve vehicle accidents and falls, said Health Minister Gan Kim Yong at the conference, adding that there are opportunities to prevent these from occurring.

Mr Gan also spoke on the important role that tightly coordinated teams of medical professionals play in delivering quality care for trauma patients. Success does not lie in the hands of only surgeons or emergency physicians, but also nurses, rehabilitation therapists and other allied health professionals, case managers and trauma coordinators who work together tirelessly and often behind the scenes, he said.

linettel@sph.com.sg



Right: Get-well cards and notes from Inuka's fans outside its enclosure in the zoo.



Inuka, despite its declining health, is said to be as sharp and stubborn as ever. Zookeepers often place pills within pieces of meat to ensure that it consumes its medication but the bear will pretend to chew the meat while secretly removing the pills. ST PHOTOS: LIM YAOHUI

## Ensuring the best comfort for Inuka

FROM B1

He added: "That is when we realised we had better do something to find out what was going on." Deputy head keeper Mohan Ponichamy, 41, recalls when Inuka's keepers first realised that something was wrong.

"Usually, every morning, Inuka will be up and ready to greet us in his den when we arrive," he said. "But there was this one morning in December 2016, when he was just unresponsive when we came. He slept the whole day and only woke up at six in the evening."

Keepers had to resort to coaxing the bear to eat. Since then, Inuka has been placed on constant painkillers.

Mr Ponichamy said that despite declining health, Inuka remains as sharp and stubborn as ever. Inuka's keepers often place pills within pieces of meat to ensure that it consumes its medication but the bear will pretend to chew the meat while secretly removing the pills. "He is really smart and he really keeps us on our toes," added Mr Ponichamy.

Inuka is now on palliative care, with its carers aiming to "make him as comfortable as possible". If its condition worsens, a decision will be made to put it down humanely on the same day of his second full medical check.

Said Dr Mathew: "If medications are taken off, his quality of life would be totally compromised. He would eventually pass away naturally, but in a very undesirable manner that is both painful and uncomfortable.

"One criterion of animal welfare is to alleviate pain.

"We will not allow an animal to suffer. It is just not responsible."

Mr Ponichamy added: "For this period of time, we are just taking it day by day. Whatever the outcome is, we are prepared."

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