



Part-time handyman Lim Thiam Beng and senior physiotherapist Jaclyn Tan giving exercise tips to a knee replacement surgery patient who wanted to be known only as Madam Chong. ST PHOTO: JONATHAN CHOO

Senior volunteers set to help elderly patients

TTSH starts 2-year pilot to train them with paraclinical skills

Felicia Choo

Having gone through knee replacement surgery two years ago, Mr Lim Thiam Beng, 54, wants to help other elderly patients recover faster by learning from physiotherapists simple bed exercises that can help such patients.

The part-time handyman is one of 70 people, aged 50 and older, who have signed up for a new volunteer programme for seniors at Tan

Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH). Over the next two years, these volunteers will be helping eye clinic and total knee replacement patients, the hospital said yesterday. They will also be trained to prevent delirium in elderly patients by orientating their environment, helping them to sit up, encouraging them to drink water and engaging them in activities such as puzzles.

The pilot programme aims to recruit 160 senior volunteers, who will receive training developed by TTSH's healthcare staff and its Centre for Health Activation (CHA), a training and research institute for volunteers.

The new programme differs from

BETTER RAPPORT
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DR MARK CHAN, Centre for Health Activation's clinical adviser.

other kinds of senior volunteerism which involve befriending activities, as volunteers will be taught paraclinical skills such as taking down a patient's medical history and demonstrating the right way to apply eye drops, said Dr Mark Chan, CHA's clinical adviser.

"Seniors are more aware of the medical issues and have much better rapport with patients, compared with some of the younger, inexperienced volunteers," he added.

The programme was launched yesterday at the Singapore Patient Conference held at TTSH, where patients, community partners and healthcare professionals shared insights on how to create a better healthcare system.

Called the Temasek Foundation Cares - Champs (Centre for Health Activation Mobilises Para-Clinical Seniors), the programme runs from September this year to August 2020, with 13,300 frail seniors expected to benefit from it.

Volunteers who are selected have to attend an induction course and must be able to commit for at least six months.

Temasek Foundation Cares, a non-profit philanthropic organisation, has donated \$293,000 to the programme.

Dr Kelvin Tan, a consultant at TTSH's Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, said volunteers can motivate patients to do the exercises in between their daily physiotherapy sessions. This can help shorten their hospital stay, which averages around five days.

A 72-year-old knee replacement surgery patient, who wanted to be known only as Madam Chong, said: "If they know how to do it properly, I'm okay with it."

The elderly make up a sizeable proportion of volunteers, who do not perform paraclinical roles, at other healthcare institutions such as those under SingHealth, and the National University Hospital (NUH).

More than 70 per cent of volunteers for some programmes at Singapore General Hospital, Changi General Hospital and SingHealth Poly-clinics are aged 50 and above, said a SingHealth spokesman.

Besides serving meals and feeding patients, they also guide them in using self-service kiosks to make payment.

NUH has elderly volunteers who engage elderly patients in activities such as colouring and providing hair cutting services for patients.

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Man jailed for making false report on NDP bombing plot

Shaffiq Alkhatib

Unhappy with the Singapore Government after he was jailed and caned here over an immigration offence, a Malaysian man decided to seek revenge by creating a bogus suicide bombing plot targeting the 40th National Day Parade (NDP).

On July 24, 2005, Khor Chye Siew, went to a cybercafe in Hat Yai, Thailand, and sent an e-mail to the SingGov Feedback account. The message was read by Ms Sarina Isnin, who was then working as an assistant manager at the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts. Khor wrote in the e-mail: "There's going to be three suicide bombings during your country's 40th National Day Parade. I know who and where these crooks are. You guys still have plenty of time to crack down (on) these people." Ms Sarina forwarded the e-mail to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Defence, the court heard.

Khor, 42, who is now a British national, was jailed for four months yesterday after pleading guilty to giving false information to a public servant.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Thiagesh Sukumaran said Khor was sent back to Malaysia in 2005 after serving his previous sentence. He went to Hat Yai soon after, and sent the e-mail. Singapore authorities managed to trace the cybercafe and Criminal Investigation Department (CID) officers flew to Thailand.

The CID team interviewed Khor, who claimed he had been housed with two Pakistani inmates, Billal and Qadeer, while serving his jail term in Portdown Prison, and the pair had spoken about the July 7, 2005, London bombings. He also claimed he had drawn the conclusion that the Pakistanis would be targeting the NDP when they began talking about the event.

Khor gave two inmate numbers to the officers. The CID team investigated Khor's claims and found the numbers belonged to two Singaporeans who had never met him. The team determined that the bomb threat was a hoax in May 2006, said the DPP.

Khor was placed on an Interpol watch list and arrested on May 26 this year when he arrived in Singapore from London.

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Khor Chye Siew, 42, was jailed yesterday for four months after pleading guilty to giving false information to a public servant.

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