

# Initiative to improve chronic wound care for elderly patients

**More training and innovation in the pipeline to ensure better treatment**

**Cheryl Tan**

More training and innovation are being lined up to ensure better treatment for elderly patients with chronic wounds such as bed sores and diabetic foot ulcers.

Wounds like these can lead to longer hospital stays, putting a strain on healthcare resources, a study has found.

It noted that the average confinement in hospital for each wound episode was 17.7 days, 2.4 times that of the average length of stay in Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH).

Patients with diabetic foot ulcers had to stay an average of 15.8 days in the hospital while those with bed sores were there for 18.6 days, noted the study conducted between 2013 and 2017 and carried out by TTSH in collaboration with the Skin Research Institute of Singapore's (SRIS) Wound Care Innovation for the Tropics programme.

An initiative to tackle this is under way with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the TTSH Centre for Asian Nursing Studies and the SRIS yesterday. SRIS is a tripartite partnership between the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A\*Star), the National Healthcare Group and Nanyang Technological University.

The collaboration will see more training opportunities for nurses in polyclinics and community health nurses, who visit patients in their homes to help them manage chronic conditions.

TTSH nurse clinician Sivakami Muthuveerappa said this could allow for timely intervention without requiring the patient to return to the hospital for treatment.

For instance, treating patients with venous leg ulcers, which are slow-healing sores due to poor blood circulation in the leg, requires compression bandages.

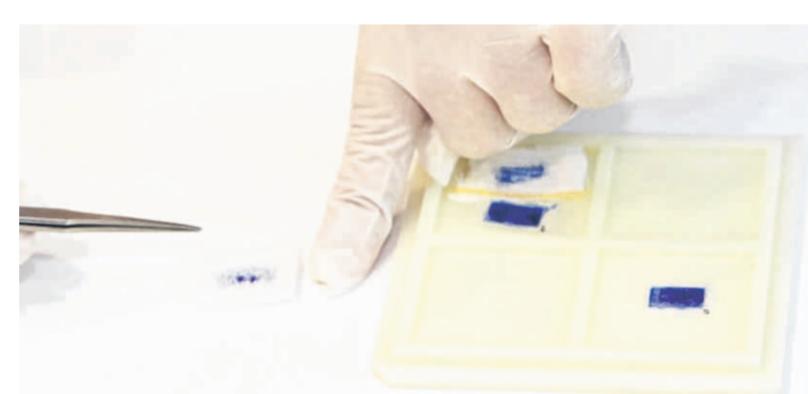
"This requires the nurse to be skilled as the pressure applied to the patient must be at an optimal level. If it's too high, the patient is at risk of losing the limb and if it's too low, the wound might not heal fast enough," she said.

More innovation for products that could aid wound healing are also in the pipeline.

For instance, a disposable pressure sensor was developed for patients with venous leg ulcers by the SRIS, A\*Star's Institute of Materials Research and Engineering and TTSH to ensure optimal pressure is delivered in compression bandages.



Above: (From left) Skin Research Institute of Singapore programme manager (Wound Care Innovation for the Tropics programme) Ng Yizhen; A\*Star scientist Lim Su Hui; Tan Tock Seng Hospital nurse clinician Sivakami Muthuveerappa; and TTSH nurse clinician Tina Lai at a demonstration of the disposable pressure sensor for compression bandage, developed for patients with venous leg ulcers. Below: The disposable pressure sensor resembles a micro-bubble wrap and, upon compression, the micro-chambers will rupture and release a dye to indicate that sufficient pressure has been achieved. ST PHOTOS: TIMOTHY DAVID



nurses to apply the correct amount of pressure for the patient, said Dr Ng Yizhen, programme manager (Wound Care Innovation for the Tropics programme), SRIS.

The product prototype is moving into its development stage to scale up for manufacturing and will likely be ready in three years, she added.

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This can be useful in training

The device, which resembles a "micro-bubble wrap", is made of a thin, multi-layer film consisting of an array of micron-sized chambers, each filled with a dye solution. Upon compression, the micro-chambers will rupture and release a dye to indicate that sufficient pressure has been achieved.

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nurses to apply the correct amount of pressure for the patient, said Dr Ng Yizhen, programme manager (Wound Care Innovation for the Tropics programme), SRIS.

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## MOM warns public about fake e-mail seeking info

A fake e-mail purportedly from the Ministry of Manpower's (MOM) Assurance, Care and Engagement (ACE) group, seeking contact details from recipients for a vaccination exercise, has been circulating online, the ministry said.

In a Facebook post, MOM warned the public about the phishing scam and asked those who got it to lodge police reports.

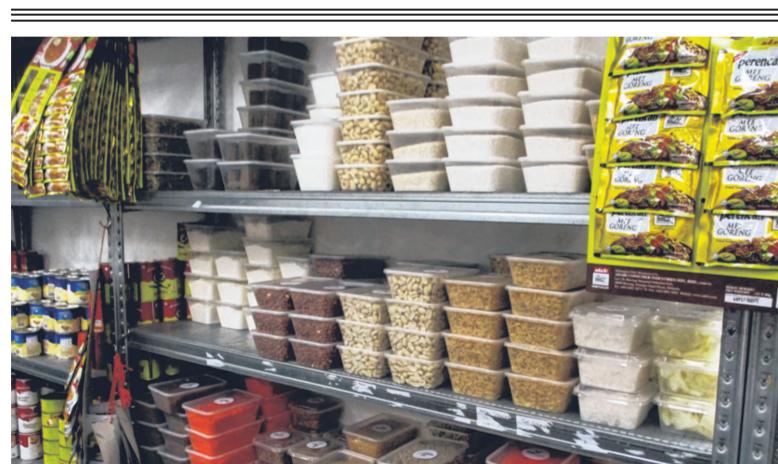
"MOM would like to advise members of the public who received the e-mail to ignore it and not to respond, download the attachments or click on any links," it said.

The public should use the official MOM website for information and transactions with the ministry, it added.

This is not the first time MOM has warned of a phishing attempt. Last June, MOM warned that a potential phishing campaign designed to steal personal data as well as the financial information of individuals and companies was being planned by hackers using a fake MOM e-mail address.

MOM said it had received information that the campaign targeted businesses, and reminded the public to use only its official website for all MOM-related matters.

Sherlyn Sim



Qiksmart was found repacking food into small containers at an unlicensed location in Ubi Crescent in July last year. PHOTO: SINGAPORE FOOD AGENCY

## Online grocer's owner fined for illegally repacking food

A Singaporean woman who owns online grocer Qiksmart was fined \$1,000 yesterday for illegally repacking food on unlicensed premises.

Junaidah Ahmad, 57, is the sole proprietor of the company.

Singapore Food Agency (SFA) officers discovered in July last year that the company was repacking food into small containers bearing its label at an unlicensed location in an industrial area in Ubi Crescent.

Qiksmart had repacked about 265kg of food, including products such as flour, rice, sugar, beans, nuts, dried shrimp and frozen fish.

Premises must be licensed by the SFA if repacking food is carried out.

"Repacking of food products in unlicensed premises poses a food safety risk," it said.

Repacking food on unlicensed premises carries a fine of up to \$5,000. Subsequent convictions can bring fines of up to \$10,000 or a prison term of up to three months, or both.

Ng Wei Kai

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