

TTSH to roll out new delirium test, treatment protocol

Move follows 2-year trial; condition hits nearly 30% of older patients globally

Lee Li Ying
Correspondent

Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) will roll out a care bundle developed by its nurses to better detect and prevent delirium among its older patients to all its wards as early as the end of the year after a successful two-year trial.

Delirium, in which patients are confused, disoriented and cannot think or remember clearly, impacts nearly 30 per cent of older patients globally at some time during hospitalisation. But the condition is hard to detect because it bears similarities to dementia, and delirious patients behave differently, said advanced practice nurse and team lead of the delirium care bundle project Jennifer Li Yuan.

Dr Lim Jun Pei, a consultant at TTSH's Department of Geriatric Medicine and co-lead of the initiative, said the gold standard in diagnosing the condition is the confusion assessment method. But the assessment takes about half an hour and, given its laborious nature, is hard to use as a screening tool across the board.



A nursing team using standardised delirium screening tools on Thursday to identify patients who are experiencing delirium or are at risk of developing the condition in a mock set-up at Tan Tock Seng Hospital.
ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

In 2019, the hospital introduced the delirium care bundle in a surgical ward after feedback from staff that the number of patients becoming delirious in such wards was quite high, said Ms Li, who worked

with three other nurses on the project. She added that up to 50 per cent of elderly patients globally suffer from delirium after surgery. As part of the care bundle, nurses

use a screening tool called 4AT, developed by the University of Edinburgh. The two-minute test has four assessment portions in which patients are asked questions such as their age, date of birth and the

current year, and also to recite the months of a year backwards. Those who score four or more points are suspected of having delirium, and are referred to doctors for treatment. Those who are at risk of developing delirium will be started on an intervention protocol to improve cognition and prevent functional decline. This includes reminding them who they are and why they are in hospital, engaging them in activities such as puzzles or board games and ensuring they have enough sleep and hydration. A pilot study between 2020 and 2021 showed earlier and more accurate identification of delirium among elderly surgical patients. Out of the 220 at-risk patients screened, 51 or 24 per cent were diagnosed to have delirium with 88 per cent accuracy. Previously, less than 16 per cent of patients in the surgical ward were detected. Delirium can be triggered by infections, surgery, side effects of medication, pain and serious illnesses. Those at risk include patients aged 65 and older, those who have brain diseases including dementia or stroke, and the frail and immobile. Ms Li said delirium needs to be treated promptly or patients may have to stay in hospital longer, and face more complications and a higher risk of being admitted into a nursing home prematurely. Dr Lim said delirium can also affect a patient's ability to receive care. "Those who are delirious can sometimes remove tubes or dressings, and these behaviours are harmful to themselves."

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Youth committed series of sexual offences involving multiple victims

Shaffiq Alkhatib
Court Correspondent

A serial sexual offender was 14 years old when he first molested a girl in 2017. He went on to commit more sexual crimes involving other female victims before he was charged in court in January 2022.

While out on bail, he recorded upskirt videos of women on escalators at MRT stations on five occasions between Nov 7, 2022 and Jan 11, 2023. The offender, who is now 20, pleaded guilty on Monday to multiple offences, including molestation and sexually penetrating a minor. He cannot be named because of a gag order to protect the victims' identities.

He started committing sexual offences in August 2017 at the age of 14, when he molested a female schoolmate who was around 14 or 15 years old at the time. In February 2019, he committed offences, including sexual penetration, against a 12-year-old Secondary 1 schoolmate, whom he had invited to his home for a water fight. Around two months later, he took a female part-time lifeguard's underwear from her bag during an event at a swimming complex where he was a volunteer. She later made a police report.

The offender struck again in May 2019 when he went to a park with a fourth victim, a 13-year-old schoolmate, and played a game of truth or

care with her.

He dared her to take off her skirt a few times, but she refused to do so.

He then dared her to take off her skirt. She complied as she was wearing a pair of shorts underneath.

The offender later slipped a hand into her shorts and sexually penetrated her.

In October 2019, he used his mobile phone in an attempt to view a 22-year-old woman changing in a toilet at a Shenton Way condominium, where he was attending a gathering.

When the woman spotted the device, she immediately wrapped herself in a towel. She saw the youth running away towards some barbecue pits.

Court documents did not disclose what happened next, but he later confessed to the woman what he had done.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Selene

The offender, who is now 20, pleaded guilty on Monday to multiple offences, including molestation and sexually penetrating a minor. He cannot be named because of a gag order to protect the victims' identities.

Yap said that the offender had not managed to make any recordings or see the fifth victim via his mobile phone.

On Jan 5, 2022, he was charged in court and released on bail that same day.

At around the same time, he was doing an internship at a local attraction with three other people, including a male classmate, who discovered that the accused's mobile phone contained upskirt videos.

DPP Yap said the classmate checked the offender's mobile phone, which had been left on a table during lunch.

"He suspected that there were incriminating materials in the (device) based on conversations he had with the accused previously. He then saw that the accused's handphone contained upskirt videos and reported it to a staff (member) at (the attraction)," she added.

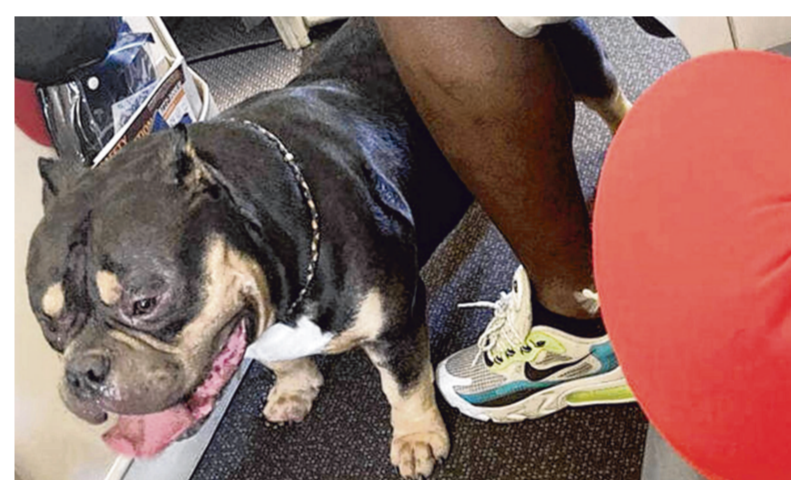
Investigators later found out that the offender had recorded videos showing the genital areas of five unidentified women between Nov 7, 2022 and Jan 11, 2023 on the escalators at MRT stations.

The court has called for a report to assess the offender's suitability for reformatory training.

Those given such a sentence are detained in a centre where they observe a strict regimen that can include foot drills and counselling.

The offender will be sentenced in October.

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The emotional support dog that the New Zealand couple sat next to on a Singapore Airlines flight in June. PHOTO: GILL AND WARREN PRESS

SIA refunds \$1,600 to couple seated next to 'snorting, farting' dog

Carmen Sin

A New Zealand couple on a Singapore Airlines (SIA) flight who were seated next to a snorting, farting dog have been given a refund of about \$1,600.

Mrs Gill Press and her husband Warren bought premium economy tickets for a 13-hour flight from Paris to Singapore in June but were dismayed to find an emotional support dog in their row, seated on the floor.

Speaking to New Zealand news outlet Stuff, Mrs Press said the animal - which appeared to be a French bulldog - farted and slob-

bered all over Mr Press' legs. The couple tried to stick it out in premium economy but in the end moved to the only available seats - in economy class - when the stink from their flatulent neighbour became unbearable, said Mrs Press.

A week later, she e-mailed a complaint to the national carrier, sparking a three-month-long wrangle.

SIA had earlier offered the couple KrisShop vouchers worth \$200, and then travel vouchers worth \$320, but the couple said nothing short of a full refund would do.

"We didn't receive the experience we paid for," Mrs Press said.

However, the latest SIA offer settled the dispute.

In response to queries, an SIA spokesman said the couple accepted an offer to reimburse them the difference in airfare between premium economy and economy class. The difference totalled NZ\$982.50 (\$795) each.

The refund came on top of the \$320 in travel vouchers given to the couple.

Mrs Press said they plan to donate the money to a charity for guide dogs.

"It wasn't about the money in the end. The fight was more about principles and not normalising things that really aren't normal and acceptable," she said.

Since April 1, SIA has banned emotional support dogs on board its flights, although it is still allowing customers to travel with their dogs if they made a request and submitted the required documents before the ban kicked in.

Emotional support animals are pets certified by a mental health professional as necessary for the mental health of their owners.

They are not the same as service or assistance animals - like seeing-eye dogs or guide dogs - trained to help those with disabilities in daily life.

Approved assistance dogs are still allowed on board SIA flights.

A spokesman for the airline earlier said it endeavours to notify customers who may be seated next to an assistance dog prior to boarding. "In circumstances where customers seated next to an assistance dog request to be moved, Singapore Airlines will assist to re-seat customers within the same cabin where space permits," the spokesman added.

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