

TOGETHER
FOR
PATIENTS

5TH YEAR RUNNING

SINGAPORE

PATIENT  **AWARDS** 
Action Awards®

CEREMONY

25 October 2019

Centre for Healthcare Innovation (CHI)



Scan here to
find out more

Visit the Singapore Patient Action Awards
Gallery at Kampung Square, CHI Level 4.

View the Singapore Patient Action Awards 2019
Video via Tan Tock Seng Hospital's YouTube
Channel and Facebook.

Jointly organised by Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH)'s Centre for Health Activation in partnership with TTSH Central Health, Institute of Geriatrics and Active Ageing, National Healthcare Group, National Healthcare Group Polyclinics, Institute of Mental Health and Yishun Health, the Singapore Patient Action Awards (SPAA) is created to acknowledge individuals and groups who have made significant and notable contributions in enhancing the healing journey of our patients – from partnering in their care journeys to giving them hope and encouragement to overcoming their illnesses and getting a new lease of life.

In the 5th edition of the awards ceremony, we continue to acknowledge the unsung heroes who have made a positive difference to the community and demonstrated exemplary qualities of care, courage, empathy, resilience, generosity of spirit, emotional and mental strength.

This year, there are 17 extraordinary individuals and groups who will be acknowledged across the 4 award categories:

- Singapore Patient Caregiver Award
- Singapore Patient Advocate Award
- Singapore Patient Support Group / Volunteer Group Award
- Singapore Patient Engagement Initiative Award

AWARD CATEGORIES



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

This award honours the caregiver who has demonstrated strength, resilience and unwavering dedication in caring for their loved ones, amidst health and/or social care challenges. The caregiver takes on the role as an active care partner with the health and/or social care team, to overcome these hurdles with a positive attitude.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ADVOCATE AWARD

This award honours an individual who is very passionate about advocating for meaningful causes and has contributed significantly to improving care delivery in partnership with the health and/or social care team/institution.



SINGAPORE PATIENT SUPPORT GROUP / VOLUNTEER GROUP AWARD

This award honours an outstanding patient support group or volunteer group that leads the way in helping others in need and has contributed significantly to improve care delivery and services.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

This award recognises an outstanding patient engagement project or initiative that is a collaboration with the health and/or social care team, contributing to the improvement of care and overall health and well-being of the patients, caregivers and/or the community.

DISTINGUISHED PANEL OF JUDGES

DR BENJAMIN KOH

Chairperson, SPAA Judging Panel
Deputy Secretary (Development)
Ministry of Health



Dr Benjamin Koh is currently the Deputy Secretary (Development) in the Ministry of Health (MOH). He oversees issues relating to infrastructure and manpower development for the healthcare sector in Singapore, as well as matters relating to ageing and eldercare. He obtained his medical degree from the National University of Singapore and a Master of Public Health from Harvard University.

Dr Koh has had previous experience in communicable disease control, international health relations and health service development in MOH. He has subsequently held leadership positions in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Social and Family Development, before his appointment as the Coordinating Divisional Director for Higher Education in the Ministry of Education, overseeing policies and development for higher education and lifelong learning.

DR WONG LOONG MUN

Principal Consultant
Chief, Care Transition Division
Agency for Integrated Care



Dr Wong Loong Mun holds a Doctorate in Social Psychology from The Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He is currently the Principal Consultant and Chief of Care Transition Division of the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC). Under his portfolio, he oversees the referral management team.

He is also the Principal Consultant to the CEO where he supports and advises the divisions within AIC on aged care matters, represent and be a standing member for internal AIC committees. He advises the CEO on all relevant professional matters pertaining to AIC's programmes and initiatives, with a focus on fostering cross-functional collaborations among the divisions. He also assists MOH on the Community Network of Seniors. Within his 18-year experience in the aged care field, Dr Wong has set up a national referral management programme in 2001, previously known as Integrated Care Services.

DISTINGUISHED PANEL OF JUDGES

MR TIMOTHY LIU

Chief Executive Officer
Dover Park Hospice

Mr Timothy Liu is the Chief Executive Officer of Dover Park Hospice and a member of the Hospital Planning Committee for HealthCity Novena, as well as a member of the Singapore Hospice Council.

He graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Madison with a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering and holds a Master of Business Administration from Arcadia University. Prior to joining Dover Park Hospice, Mr Liu had spent about 20 years in the corporate sector as a Business Development Director for Asia Pacific, specialising in the Engineering and Technology field.



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IAN LEONG

Clinical Director
Division for Central Health

Deputy Divisional Chairman
Integrative and Community Care
Tan Tock Seng Hospital

A/Prof Ian Leong is a Senior Consultant in Integrative and Community Care. His interests are in the areas of palliative care, pain in the elderly and community geriatrics. As the Clinical Director of the Division for Central Health and the Deputy Divisional Chairman of the Division of Integrative and Community Care, he is currently working on developing better systems of care in the community.

A/Prof Leong teaches at the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine in the areas of psychosocial determinants of health and illness beliefs, and teaches nurses in pain management at the Nanyang Polytechnic. Apart from this, he has published a number of papers, mostly in the areas of palliative medicine and pain in elderly.



DISTINGUISHED PANEL OF JUDGES

MR LIM HOCK LENG

Chief Operating Officer
Institute of Mental Health

Mr Lim Hock Leng guides and directs the hospital operations, encompassing ambulatory services, support services, allied health and education and research services at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH). As IMH's Quality Service Manager, he also facilitates strategic hospital taskforces and improvement projects. Mr Lim is a member of NHG Senior Management and is actively involved in projects and initiatives at the NHG level.

Prior to joining IMH, Mr Lim drove the strategic intent of transformation and simplification for Business Partner Organisations in Growth Market Units around the world and the ease of doing business with IBM for Business Partners.





Congratulations
to all
**SPAA AWARD
RECIPIENTS**

At the Singapore Patient Action Awards, we recognise exceptional individuals, teams and community initiatives that have inspired resilience, hope and compassion in the community.

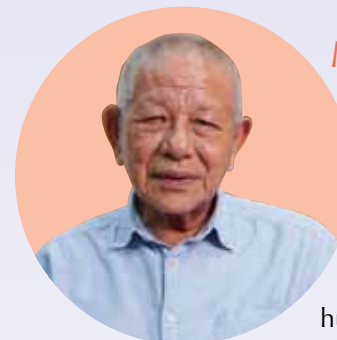


SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD 2019



MR LAI SENG CHOO

Love Makes All Things Possible



On a fateful day in August 2016, Mdm Yee Choon How, 80 years old, suffered a nasty fall which left her mentally impaired. Since then, she has been wheelchair-bound and reliant on a caregiver. Unable to eat or stand on her own, Mr Lai Seng Choo, her husband of 51 years, quit his job as a security officer and assumed the role of her carer. With the help of Methodist Welfare Services (MWS), Mdm Yee was admitted to MWS Bethany Nursing Home – Choa Chu Kang in 2016.

Solidarity in times of sickness can be self-destructive. Mr Lai makes it a point to visit his wife daily so that she is not left alone. Amidst the trials and fears of illness, his love was triumphant. Mdm Yee has made remarkable progress since, thanks to the unconditional love, care and support from Mr Lai and the rehabilitative therapy from healthcare professionals. She is able to recognise her husband once again and understands simple conversations in Cantonese and Mandarin. The road to Mdm Yee's recovery may be long, but there is unwavering faith in Mr Lai that the day will eventually come.

Through the course of his regular visits, Mr Lai is a familiar face in the nursing home. He readily steps up to befriend the other residents whenever he sees that the nurses and volunteers are busy. He also shares feedback with the healthcare team on how rehabilitative care can be improved for the residents and they have since adopted his ideas.

Love is patient, love is kind and love never gives up. In sickness and in health and every step along the way, Mr Lai and Mdm Yee will always be by each other's side.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD 2019



MR DAVID TANG KWOK KAN

Love Knows No Boundaries and Distance

Mr David Tang Kwok Fan, 82 years old, spends his free days in the living hall of his brother's house. He had lost his only son to a heart attack, a year and a half ago. With no property of his own, Mr Tang is unable to care for his beloved wife, Mary Wong Lee Chan, at home.

His plight started in 2014, when both he and his wife had a bad fall in front of the lift. Luckily for Mr Tang, he was discharged with three stitches on his head with no further complications. Mdm Wong however, was less fortunate. Since then, she has developed Parkinson's disease as well as dementia that leaves her confused and disorientated.

Left with little choice, Mr Tang made the painful decision of putting Mdm Wong under the professional care of All Saints Home in 2015 and has been visiting her everyday. Each time he visits her, Mr Tang makes sure he cleans, feeds, massages and helps Mdm Wong to exercise such that she is as comfortable as possible. He also brings her out to the nearby hawker centre for an occasional change of scenery. Most recently, he is pleased that his wife has put on healthy weight. In order to ensure he is in optimal condition as a caregiver, Mr Tang wakes up at wee hours in the morning to practice Tai Chi and maintain his fitness.

Love knows no boundaries and no distance. Despite facing financial and physical strains, Mr Tang refuses to let himself be hindered. Through caring for his wife, he found courage and in himself a strong will and purpose to carry on with his life.

Echoing the vows of marriage, he calls it his duty to care for his wife through times of sickness and in poor health. After all, he intends to keep his promise for the rest of his life.

SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD 2019



MRS ELSIE TING

Mum Who Never Gave Up

Prior to his diagnosis in 2004, Mrs Elsie Ting's son did not speak to her for one and a half years. Attributing the emotional boycott to adolescent rebelliousness, Mrs Ting waited for him to grow out of it. But he never did. Her world collapsed when her son was diagnosed with Schizophrenia. Despite her physical disability, she did not give up on him and visited him daily in the Institute of Mental Health (IMH).

Through her personal experience, people often look at mental health patients through tinted lenses. Mrs Ting recalled her inability to open up about the taboo subject and the despondence she felt when she had no one to turn to. That was when Mrs Ting recognised these difficulties were the manifestation of her own unconscious biases. From then on, Mrs Ting decided to take charge by reading up on mental health issues. With understanding comes acceptance and action. Mrs Ting found courage and strength in her to be the pillar of support for her family and herself.

Mrs Ting felt that the support for mental health patients was severely lacking. She started volunteering actively in 2012 as a Peer Support Specialist under the IMH's Early Psychosis Intervention Programme and also supported the Caregiver to Caregiver education programme started by the Caregivers Alliance Limited. She did not stop there and became the founder of the Caregivers' Association for the Mentally Ill in 2015, alongside other caregivers, to help others who were facing similar difficulties. Her advocacy and voluntary work provided support for many patients and caregivers alike through difficult times.

Her years of hard work and efforts finally paid off when her son expressed his heartfelt thanks to his parents. Now in his 40s, Mrs Ting's son has broken out of Schizophrenia's mental prison and is now working in the service industry.

When asked for advice, Mrs Ting often reiterates the importance of being mentally strong. "One must adopt a positive outlook towards mental health. IMH stands for I am Healthy!", she cheers.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD 2019



MR ALBERT YAP

A Husband's Unwavering Dedication to His Wife

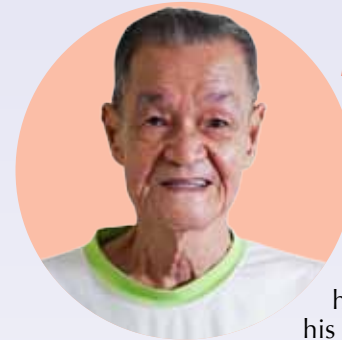
For as long as he had known her, Mrs Yap has been plagued by the blues – depression. Unaware that it was a mental illness, Mr Albert Yap Men Hian thought nothing of it. Yet, the day came when Mrs Yap was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2016 and things hit rock bottom. Mrs Yap's mental condition worsened with the news and experienced breakdowns that lasted anywhere from two weeks to months. For Mr Yap, his conundrum had just begun. Apart from taking care of Mrs Yap, he had retired eight months prior. This took a toll on his mental well-being, realising that the waves of financial burdens are descending upon him.

Apart from Mrs Yap's occasional meltdowns, making her way to public places was of a particular challenge to Mr Yap. As her husband, he felt it was his responsibility to ensure that the environment was safe for his wife. This included multiple factors he had to look out for, ranging from venue suitability, crowdedness and profiles of attending guests. He is also mindful of his choice of words and actions towards his wife to ensure that he does not upset her. Due to her mental condition, anything that involves people often proves to be challenging.

Perhaps the most disheartening of all, is the public stigma that continues to associate itself with mental illnesses despite the advances in psychiatry. There remains the reluctance for people to broach the topic on mental health as Mr Yap has noticed in his daily conversations. Without an open conversation, it closes the possibility for change. It is also this prejudicial attitude that people with mental illnesses can turn against themselves and become fearful of human interactions.

Mr Yap's journey is indeed full of peril and in it there are many dark places but he remains hopeful with never-ending positivity. Through his story, Mr Yap hopes to reach out to more caregivers who are facing similar adversities and inspire them to persevere through the difficult times.

SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD 2019



MR LEE CHO POON

From Strangers to Family

Busking in the sunny streets day and night, Mr Lee Cho Poon spent his adolescence honing his trade as a street entertainer with his father. It was when Mr Lee lost his only kin that his passion for performing took a heavy hit. He continued to perform with an uncle after his father's passing, but was forced to stop busking due to his ailing health.

As time went by, he became withdrawn and distanced himself from the community. However, his life took a turn for the better through the Lions Befrienders staff and volunteers who reached out to him regularly. With their support, smiles slowly returned to Mr Lee's life. He regained his confidence, found kindness in himself to be a caregiver, even offering a senior a place to stay at his own home.

From then on, Mr Lee has continuously taken in seniors under his care despite his old age. Mr Lee has shared his apartment with three seniors and counting. Now, he resides with Mr Neo Cheng Liang, a neighbour turned housemate. Life of a caregiver is less taxing when your housemate is also your best friend. A typical day starts with breakfast and dim sum, lunch followed by tea break, an early dinner and some TV-watching before bed. As the sole caregiver, Mr Lee also takes care of his basic hygiene and social needs. "Patience, compassion, and perseverance are traits one must possess as a caregiver," Mr Lee emphasises.

Strangers are just family members one has yet to know and while people don't always get to choose their family, Mr Lee and Mr Neo are fortunate to have found companionship in each other. Mr Lee has shown exceptional kindness by helping others and will continue to do so for many years to come.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD 2019



MR TAN KEE GUAN

Where There is Love, There is Life

"Happiness is the key to longevity," says the 93-year-old Mr Tan Kee Guan before breaking into a tender smile for his wife of 70 years, Mdm Sng Been Eng. The sweet couple led a life of mutual love, respect and dependence, but the dark clouds came when Mdm Sng was diagnosed with dementia four years ago.

The results were distressing. The couple learnt that dementia had no cure, but only ways to alleviate its symptoms and delay its effects. Since then, their roles have reversed.

Mr Tan took up the role of the primary caregiver. He makes sure that Mdm Sng takes her medication promptly and accompanies her for monthly checkups at the hospital. Under his tender loving care, Mdm Sng's condition has remained stable. Life is not much different from before as she is largely independent, carrying out daily tasks around the house. However, her mood swings deteriorated and she became more prone to bouts of irritability, leaving Mr Tan at the receiving end.

Undoubtedly, this leads to frequent squabbles, which often leaves Mr Tan remorseful quickly after. Mr Tan does his best to remain patient and dedicated to his wife. When things become too much to bear, he reveals that his simple remedy is a quick stroll around the block. It gives him time to reflect and clear his mind. Afterwards, he will be sure to make peace with his beloved wife.

Despite the diagnosis, Mr Tan is thankful for Mdm Sng, and remains positive on her health outlook. With their commitment towards each other, both of them will be well cared for by each other, come what may.

SINGAPORE PATIENT ADVOCATE AWARD 2019



MR MOHD AMIN BIN HAJI S.S. MUBARUK

Finding Strength and Hope in Helping Others

At the tender age of 10, Mr Mohd Amin Bin Haji S.S. Mubarak, was diagnosed with a rare congenital bone contracture known as Arthrogyposis Multiplex Congenita (AMC). This condition weakened his joints and affected the usage of his wrists and feet. After a gruelling battle, he was able to repair his feet through surgery and resumed his favourite sport – football.

However, Mr Amin was further plagued with another rare medical issue in his adulthood. He was diagnosed with Patent Ductus Arteriosus, which led to severe pulmonary hypertension (a type of high blood pressure that affects the arteries in his lungs and the right side of his heart) over time. This caused him to experience constant lethargy and breathlessness. The simple act of doing laundry or taking a shower could quickly tire him. Coupled with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), Mr Amin's health condition is grim enough for anyone to fall into despair.

Looking into the face of multiple adversities, Mr Amin refused to let his multiple illnesses and setbacks define him. His physical limitations were of no match to his mental strength. Through his conditions, Mr Amin recognised the lack of support groups for certain illnesses and the feelings of isolation some patients may be facing upon their diagnosis. A man with a mission, Mr Amin set up the first Pulmonary Hypertension Support Group (PHSG) in 2004. Over time, the group grew into a one stop centre which provides moral support amongst its members. PHSG also expanded beyond Singapore General Hospital and has garnered the support of 3 other healthcare institutions and specialty centres such as Changi General Hospital, National Heart Centre and National University Health System. Mr Amin aims to advise and befriend patients going through the same ordeal he once did, to prevail and emerge as survivors of chronic illnesses and lesser known medical conditions.

Through his actions, Mr Amin has showed that strength does not come from physical capacity but indomitable will. His story of tenacity will continue to serve as an inspiration for many others.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ADVOCATE AWARD 2019



MR CHIA HONG SEN

To Light a Guiding Path

Born with Retinal Dystrophy, Mr Chia Hong Sen's world was a swirl of lights and shadows. Yet, that did not hinder him from seeing. With the aid of technology, Mr Chia recently graduated from the Singapore Institute of Management. A fervent advocate for technology, Mr Chia aims to help the visually impaired and others alike through these modern advancements.

Being born blind has acclimatised him to a world of resilience. As Mr Chia has never experienced a transition from sight to visual impairment, he finds it an advantage and has learnt not to "sweat the small stuff". During his teenage years, Mr Chia discovered the usefulness of technology, such as object recognition applications and screen readers, in aiding the visually impaired like himself. These innovations have brought accessibility and confidence to Mr Chia. He has since been able to navigate through his daily life and education independently, needing only occasional help when the visuals involved infographics.

Now, Mr Chia commits himself to helping others, in particular the visually impaired through the use of assistive technology. He teaches them to perform tasks such as typing on the keyboard and using Microsoft Office software such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint. At times, he also shows them how to use their smartphones. Once, a senior went to him with zero knowledge on operating a smart phone but became proficient in basic communication and was even able to listen to the radio after consulting Mr Chia. Indeed, there is no greater joy than helping others.

Whether it is living independently or empowering other visually impaired individuals, Mr Chia has proven that visual impairment does not mean a lesser life. He is a beacon of hope for the visually impaired community in Singapore.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ADVOCATE AWARD 2019



MS SHARON TEO LAY HOON

The Voice of Change Speaks Softly

The late Ms Sharon Teo Lay Hoon had Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, the same disease that plagued Stephen Hawking. A brutal, unforgiving illness of the neurological system, sufferers experience progressive muscle wasting, speech and swallowing difficulties. Deaths typically occur due to respiratory failure within 3 to 5 years of symptom onset. To date, there is no known cure.

Homebound, Ms Teo relied very much on a caregiver. As the illness progressed, she lost movement in her arms and legs and became socially isolated. "Why is this happening to me?" Sharon often wondered.

While skeletal muscles are severely affected in ALS, eye muscles are far less affected. With this as her only advantage, Ms Teo made full use of Tobii, an eye recognition device, to communicate on a daily basis. With Tobii, Ms Teo was able to use WhatsApp, write emails and even articles and PowerPoint slides for presentations.

Picking herself up, Ms Teo refused to let her physical vulnerability dampen her spirits. She has since written and published three articles in an international newsletter for alternative communication. She looked for ways to make the best out of her situation and focused on what lay ahead.

Ms Teo never failed to look out for others despite her own predicament. She hoped to be voice that connected patients and volunteers. She would make her needs known and share her experiences with volunteers by providing constructive feedback. This provided critical information in how volunteers would approach patients like her, so they can in turn do more for others sharing the same plight.

Death is not extinguishing the light but putting out the lamp because dawn has come. Ms Teo will be fondly remembered as nurturing, caring and protective in her deeds and an inspiration to the community.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD 2019

CHIT CHAT CAFE

A Voice for the Voiceless

Silent and invisible, Aphasia is a chronic and complex condition hardly known in Singapore. It is a language impairment caused by a brain injury, trauma, or tumour. Aphasia patients may experience difficulties speaking, understanding speech, reading and writing to varying degrees. Aphasia presents differently in every person who has the condition; some may be non-fluent in speech but has intact comprehension while another may be able to speak in sentences but has difficulty reading and writing. The lack of physical manifestation means that the public is often unable to distinguish these patients and identify their need for help.



Recognising the lack of understanding and knowledge on aphasia in Singapore, the founder of Chit Chat Cafe, Ms Evelyn Khoo, is determined to put an end to the silent sufferings of aphasia patients. Thus, Chit Chat Cafe – the first and only aphasia support network in Singapore, was born.

On the 4th Saturday of every month, Chit Chat Cafe pops up at a new location for “a day of business”, where volunteers serve drinks, sandwiches and cakes. Their only “customers” are people with aphasia. To date, Chit Chat Cafe has hosted many conversations to raise awareness on aphasia. It also serves as an active platform to gather feedback on the challenges most patients and caregivers have faced. Through this interactive means, Ms Evelyn hopes to shed light on the complexities of the condition in Singapore and provide information and education to those who need it. Besides the supported conversations, volunteers also facilitate games, singing sessions and even live music performances.

Chit Chat Cafe hopes to create a vibrant community of carers where healthcare professionals, caregivers and patients are aligned in a common understanding of the challenges and struggles one another goes through.

A big believer that “Together, we can do much more!”, Ms Khoo hopes to build a community of support for aphasia patients through the collective efforts of everyone at the Chit Chat Cafe. She hopes to give a voice to the voiceless and make Singapore a better and kinder place for people with aphasia.

SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD 2019



FORGET US NOT

LIEN FOUNDATION

KHOO TECK PUAT HOSPITAL

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE ASSOCIATION

Be a Dementia Friend

To most, dementia can be considered an onset of ageing, a mental illness, or an irreversible disease of the brain. Yet unknown to most, many persons with dementia are often isolated, or hidden from the community in fear of incurring negative reactions from friends, neighbours and even relatives.



The lack of understanding and public awareness often leads to poor quality of care, resulting in hopelessness and frustration in care recipients and caregivers alike. The Forget Us Not initiative was launched by the Lien Foundation together with Khoo Teck Puat Hospital in early 2016 to build a community of care to foster dementia-friendly communities, alongside the destigmatisation of dementia. As a boost to the initiative, Alzheimer's Disease Association joined as a key partner in 2017 to expand its efforts.

A stigma is a powerful label with adverse connotations. It causes one to be less receptive to the objective truth while blinded by subjective impression. Apart from the public eye, persons with dementia suffer from self-stigmatisation. Keeping this in mind, Forget Us Not launched multiple creative initiatives and across different platforms, ranging from talks, seminars, short films to even “getais” to reach out to caregivers and the public alike with information on dementia, and dispel myths surrounding the condition. Through their efforts, Forget Us Not educates the public that persons with dementia are still able to have a good quality of life and age in place, so long as the right infrastructures and support systems are put into place.

Education is undeniably an effective soft power instrument in the long run. Forget Us Not hopes that society can become more receptive and forthcoming, in coming together and building a community that is more empathetic, helpful and understanding towards persons with dementia and their caregivers.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD 2019

THE HUT

INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

Little Hut on the Prairie

Ms Margaret Hendriks had an idea, one that would break the tinted lenses of society and bring normalcy to mental health patients and carers. She had an inspiration from foreign shores and their drop-in centres would soon become the model The HUT was conceptualised from. Similarly, Ms Serlina Eng received feedback from patients for a place where they could relax and discuss issues in a non-clinical setting. Together, the two of them worked to set up The HUT.



Bridging the hospital and community, The HUT is a common ground where anyone could drop-in for a quick cuppa. Situated on the fringe of the Institute of Mental Health (IMH), The HUT welcomes a large traffic of patients, healthcare professionals, and public alike. Chilling on its comfy couches, the infrastructure overlooks a vast plot of greenery. It is also equipped with a garden plot where patients and carers can engage in simple gardening. If one is lucky, he/she may even chance upon an impromptu baking session and walk away with some tasty treats!

Despite its casual concept, The HUT was built with the aim to facilitate the reintegration of mental health patients back into the community and eventually reach a sense of normalcy. The HUT creates perfect opportunities for interaction and to encourage staff volunteerism, and the heightened levels of human interactions will promote friendly exchanges and in turn create a common ground of mutual understanding and acceptance. This opens the likelihood for greater empathy and destigmatisation of mental illnesses.

Apart from its mission, The HUT also provides a creative outlet for patients who simply wish to pick up some new skills. As they learn, they gain confidence and by extension, independence. This will be integral in facilitating a smoother integration back into the society. Through this creative initiative, this little hut will surely grow bigger.

SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD 2019



ME TOO! CLUB

MOVEMENT FOR THE INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED OF SINGAPORE (MINDS)

Advocating for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

In Singapore, adults with intellectual disabilities often face unique challenges, many of whom are no longer receiving any centre-based services. To address this concern, the National Council of Social Services (NCSS) started a pilot programme in 2015 to help this population step out of their comfort zone and engage with the society. The Me Too! Club (MTC) by Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS) was established.



MTC is a programme to enhance the social integration of people with intellectual disabilities (PWIDs) through leisure and befriending activities. Specifically, it is targeted at youths and adults aged 16 and above. Weekly activities and monthly outings are organised, and clients are engaged in many activities such as baking, sing-a-long, and even rock climbing. They also embarked on tours to Universal Studios Singapore and other places of interest, and plan annual trips to Malaysia for a quick getaway.

Through constant interactions and reassurance, volunteers have observed positive changes in the clients. Many of the clients who were once easily agitated, frustrated, and stress-prone emerged more confident and outgoing. They have also developed a strong sense of wanting to belong in the society.

MTC also provides caregiver respite service by taking the responsibility of care off their shoulders temporarily, such that the caregivers are able to catch a breather. Caregivers are also welcome to join MTC activities, where they build support groups with each other.

Understanding and acceptance are crucial for the integration of the disabled community back into the society. Each and every PWID has the capacity to contribute to our society in tangible and intangible ways, and it is everyone's duty to support them and see them for their abilities, beyond disabilities.



SINGAPORE PATIENT SUPPORT GROUP / VOLUNTEER GROUP AWARD 2019

MATCHSTICKS INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

Ignite Your Passion, Spark a Difference

Every Saturday morning, a group of selfless youths come together to visit the residents of Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and brighten their day. Unfazed by the familial disapproval and academic pressure, Matchsticks is determined to tackle the social stigmas associated with mental health and the older generation.



Matchsticks is a youth volunteer group with members ranging from students to working adults. Founded in November 2014, Matchsticks has grown to be the largest youth volunteering group in IMH with more than 70 regular volunteers.

To the members of Matchsticks, volunteerism is not simply a choice, but a lifestyle. To help their members stay committed in the long run, these youths come up with new and interactive hands-on activities to retain the freshness and level of engagement from volunteers and residents alike. These include festive celebrations, art-and-craft sessions, board games, sports and dancing, as well as a simple day out to the parks and places of interest. Befriending the elderly residents at IMH comes naturally to these sociable youths as they share personal stories and life experiences with one another, looking beyond their health conditions and understanding them as a fellow human beings. Over the years, strong bonds are formed in this system of trust and rapport. With this, Matchsticks' volunteers in turn help to bridge the gaps between the residents and the outside world, dispelling social misconceptions and raising awareness on mental health in the process.

Like the collective flames of lighted matchsticks, the group shines brighter together through their collective efforts in igniting passion for volunteerism in younger generations, contributing towards a sustainable future in our community of carers.



SINGAPORE PATIENT SUPPORT GROUP / VOLUNTEER GROUP AWARD 2019

CASSIA RESETTLEMENT TEAM

Building Communities of Care in Cassia

Cassia Resettlement Team (CRT) started as a ground-up initiative to support and care for residents at Blk 52 Cassia Crescent, majority of whom had been relocated from rental housing estates at Dakota Crescent and Sims Drive.



While many services and schemes are available, awareness and accessibility are major problems faced by residents. Moreover, residents and community needs are dynamic and do not often fit into the neat boxes which services are organized into. Recognising these gaps, CRT conducted regular home visits, building relationships and trust with the community to act as a bridge of trust to connect various agencies with residents, ensuring that help will reach those in need.

While "family as the first line of support" may be a key pillar of Singapore's social policy, unfortunately, that is not always realistic. In times like this, volunteers from CRT would step up and become the caregivers for these residents, journeying with them like how friends or family would, looking after residents' social, emotional and physical well-being.

CRT works closely with a wide range of community stakeholders: from social services, healthcare, grassroots to government agencies. When possible, the team creates space for the professionals to enter and support residents; and when required, the team steps up to fill in the gaps which are not met by services or professionals. Advocacy is essential to CRT, as the team believes in helping professionals, policymakers and institutions understand the challenges faced by the community, in order to work together to find innovative solutions that would best serve the community.

The latest initiative by CRT, named *Twinkle Wishes*, supports the community through increasing awareness and enhancing access to end-of-life planning and conversations in the community. It also provides care and support for patients who are embarking on their end-of-life journey in the community. CRT believes that the responsibility of care should not be left for anyone to shoulder alone. Whenever and wherever help is needed, these dedicated volunteers will be there to journey with the community.



SINGAPORE PATIENT SUPPORT GROUP / VOLUNTEER GROUP AWARD 2019

NKF PERITONEAL DIALYSIS SUPPORT GROUP

For Patients, By Patients

Also known as “home dialysis”, Peritoneal Dialysis (PD) is an arduous process. One may spend up to 12 hours or more within a day waiting for the procedure to be done. Due to its time-consuming nature, patients often find themselves confined within the four walls of their homes, unable to venture out for social interactions. Over time, this results in social isolation that takes a heavy toll on their mental well-being.



Every problem often has a solution. In January 2017, the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) started a Patient Support Group for those undergoing PD at home.

With patients as its volunteers, the NKF PD support group lends an authentic voice of support for fellow patients and their caregivers as they understand their ordeals and concerns. The support group members bring patients out of their homes and attend sharing sessions together. During their get-togethers, individuals will take turns to share their own stories and offer advice, support and solutions to those who have been newly diagnosed, or are dithering on the treatment itself. Often, they participate in educational talks and revision training, especially on hygiene, as they do not have nurses at home to take care of the sanitation process. Continuous education is crucial, as PD is a home-based procedure that relies heavily on a patient’s own ability and responsibility to take charge of his/her health. “You want to continue living the way you have been before you start dialysis”, says Ms Jade Hwa, an active volunteer.

Taking responsibility for one’s health is a virtue. By encouraging patients to better manage their health, family members are reassured and have peace of mind. These kidney patients are in turn setting good examples for their friends, relatives, paving the way for a community of better choices, better health.



SINGAPORE PATIENT SUPPORT GROUP / VOLUNTEER GROUP AWARD 2019

NHGP GUIDING HANDS VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME

Lending a Guiding Hand

Visiting the doctors can often be a daunting task to even the bravest souls. Everyone needs a little help along the way, and this is where the Guiding Hands Volunteer Programme comes into play.



Founded in 2011, the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics’ (NHGP) Guiding Hands Volunteer Programme helps patients and caregivers in meaningful roles such as care navigation, health advocacy and physical assistance.

As part of its core onboarding programme, all Guiding Hands’ volunteers are inducted as fall ambassadors to look-out for the frail, elderly and unsteady patients, offering and accompanying them to service points. Some of these volunteers are also trained to conduct guided tours at NHGP’s Ageing-in-Place (AIP) Studio, a mock-up apartment with elder-proofing home fittings in Toa Payoh Polyclinic. They highlight potential fall hazards and advise visitors on fall prevention as well as home modification techniques which they can apply.

A new initiative introduced in 2018 also allows trained volunteers to approach patients and offer thematic health education on a one-to-one basis. Patients benefit from personalised health engagement with an educational focus, complemented with health information and interactive activity.

The Guiding Hands Volunteer Programme has enhanced the health literacy of volunteers and patients who in turn spread their learnings amongst their community, contributing towards healthcare activation where everyone takes personal ownership of their health. It hopes to continue to spread and cultivate the spirit of learning, sharing and caring within the community they serve.