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6TH YEAR RUNNING

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Jointly organised by Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH)'s Centre for Health Activation in partnership with TTSH Central Health, 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 give them hope and encouragement to overcoming their illnesses and getting a new lease of life.

In the 6th edition of SPAA, we continue to honour 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 8 extraordinary individuals and groups who were acknowledged across 5 award categories:

- **Singapore Community Engagement Initiative Award (NEW!)**
- **Singapore Patient Caregiver Award**
- **Singapore Patient Advocate Award**
- **Singapore Patient Support Group / Volunteer Group Award**
- **Singapore Patient Engagement Initiative Award**

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AWARD CATEGORIES



SINGAPORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

This award honours the work of successful neighbourhood-based initiatives that have contributed significantly to the improvement of care and overall well-being of residents and the local community/neighbourhood.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

This award honours the caregiver who has demonstrated strength, resilience and unwavering dedication in caring for another person who requires support in physical/mental/social well-being, 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 and resilient attitude.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ADVOCATE AWARD

This award honours an individual who is very passionate about advocating meaningful causes and has contributed significantly to improving care delivery in partnership with the health and/or social care team/institution. Being personally involved in the care journey as a patient, a volunteer and/or a caregiver, this individual uses his/her personal experience to provide valuable learning for health and/or social care professionals.



SINGAPORE PATIENT SUPPORT GROUP / VOLUNTEER GROUP AWARD

This award honours an outstanding Patient Support Group or Volunteer Group that has led the way in helping others in need and has contributed significantly to improving health and/or social care delivery.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

This award recognises an outstanding patient engagement project or initiative that is in collaboration with the health care team, intermediate and long-term care teams (ILTC) and/or social service agency; contributing to the improvement of care for patients and/or caregivers. Only projects or initiatives involving active participation from patients, caregivers and/or volunteers, together with the health and/or social care team may apply.

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 population health.



DR WONG LOONG MUN
Chief, Care Integration & Operations Division &
Customer Experience Department
Customer Group
Agency for Integrated Care

Dr Wong Loong Mun is the Chief, Care Integration and Operations Division & Customer Experience Department at the Agency for Integrated Care. He holds a doctorate in social psychology.

Under his portfolio, he oversees the referral management team, case management team and customer experience team. He has been in aged care field more than 19 years, having set up this new national referral management programme in 2001, previously known as Integrated Care Services.



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 has spent about 20 years in the corporate sector as a Business Development Director for Asia Pacific, specialising in the Engineering and Technology field.

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 the National Healthcare Group (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.



DR TAN KOK LEONG
Family Physician, Senior Consultant
Head Department of Continuing and Community Care
Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Dr Tan Kok Leong's interests are in the areas of post-discharge care and working alongside community partners in the holistic management of the patients in the community. He is also involved in the Post-Graduate trainings and teachings in Family Medicine.

As the Clinical Lead for the Transitional & Community Care work-stream for Community Health, he assists in planning and implementation works to improve the physical, mental, and social well-being of the residents in the Central Zone.



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL SINGAPORE PATIENT ACTION AWARDS RECIPIENTS

The Singapore Patient Action Awards recognises exceptional individuals and groups across all health and social care institutions in Singapore - our Kampung Heroes. Their efforts and initiatives have inspired resilience, hope and compassion in the community.





SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

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MR NICHOLAS SIM 66 YEARS OLD

Positivity in Times of Adversity

The lives of Mr Nicholas Sim and his family changed drastically when his wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease eight years ago. This silent and progressive disease quickly stripped Nicholas's wife of her cognitive and motor abilities. Nicholas immediately recognised that he was needed to hold the fort for his family as his two children were still schooling at that time.



Driven by his duty as her husband and love for his wife, Nicholas made the painful decision of closing his business to become a freelance lecturer so that he could be the primary caregiver for his wife. Prior to her diagnosis, Nicholas's wife was a loving wife and mother. Having experienced her unconditional love for him and their children, it came as second nature for Nicholas to continue caring for his wife as her condition worsened. Although his wife may not be physically or superficially aware, he deeply believes there are some moments where his wife is present. These are the moments of affection where he gently holds her hand and lets her know that he is always by her side.

Alzheimer's disease is a common type of young onset dementia where diagnosis is made before the age of 65. Since the time when his wife was first diagnosed, the number of people with young onset dementia has increased. Strongly believing that happiness works in a cycle, Nicholas finds greater happiness in helping others find their own happiness amidst adversities. He actively partners with organisations such as the National Neuroscience Institute and Care Community Services Society's CareLibrary, a cognitive wellness programme, to reach out to new caregivers caring for patients with dementia. Nicholas hopes that by sharing his experiences, he is able to shorten their learning curve and ease their burden as caregivers.

Nicholas's caregiving journey has been fraught with many challenges but he always takes them in his stride and remains positive through it all. Taking inspiration from his favourite song 'One Moment in Time', Nicholas's never-ending positivity stems from the fact that at every moment, he gives his all and makes the best out of each day with his wife.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD



MS VICTORIA JANE QUEK 18 YEARS OLD

Kindness, the Gift That Keeps on Giving

When she was 14 years old, Ms Victoria Jane Quek did not quite have the life of a typical teenager. While others were juggling between school and play, Victoria had to juggle between taking care of her mother and her studies. Her life changed when her late mother, Mrs Annabelle Quek, was diagnosed with kidney failure in 2015 and had to begin haemodialysis treatment. The



news broke when Mrs Quek was rushed to the emergency room and had to be resuscitated. During this stressful time, rather than letting the nerves get the better of her, Victoria listened to the doctors calmly and strived to have a clearer understanding of her mother's condition.

Kidney failure places many restrictions on one's life. The simple act of drinking too much water can cause breathing difficulties. Learning to adapt to life as a patient with kidney failure was not easy for Mrs Quek and her family. Being the oldest in the family, Victoria stepped up and became the pillar of strength and hope for her mother and her two younger sisters.

When her mother's condition took a turn for the worse, Victoria made a tough decision to stop schooling to be a full time caregiver for her mother. Though it was not an easy journey, Victoria persevered and for three years, she self-studied during the periods where her mother was away for her dialysis. On examination days, she would rush to school to complete her paper before heading back to the hospital to be by her mother's side. During the last few months of her mother's life, Victoria had to undertake the burden of being a spokesperson and decision-maker for Mrs Quek as her mother became weak and delirious.

Since her mother's passing in November 2019, Victoria was inspired by the nurses who looked after her mother and decided to pursue a course in nursing at the Institute of Technical Education. While she might not be able to completely take away the pain and suffering of others, Victoria hopes that as a future nurse, her kindness can touch the lives of patients and caregivers and make their care journey a little easier.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD



MDM ANG SWEE HUAY 92 YEARS OLD

A Mother's Love Knows No Bounds

Raising five children on her own was no easy feat for Mdm Ang Swee Huay. Mdm Ang had to struggle to make ends meet and at the same time be the sole caregiver for her daughter, Ms Cheong Mee Choo, who has polio and depression, and her son, Mr Cheong Poh Fatt, who was diagnosed with schizophrenia since his teenage years.



Despite being diagnosed with breast and colon cancer herself in 2013 and 2016 respectively, Mdm Ang never gave up caring for her children. Wanting nothing but the best for her children, she diligently prepared home-cooked meals for them and provided for them in every way possible. When Mee Choo became paralysed waist down as a result of polio, Mdm Ang relentlessly cares for her daughter's daily needs and supported her in every way.

Life threw another curveball at her in 2016 when Mdm Ang was diagnosed with early signs of dementia. Her immediate concerns were the care needs of Mee Choo and Poh Fatt. Refusing to give up on her children, she sought help to make arrangement for their long term care needs which led her to St. Andrew's Nursing Home (Taman Jurong). There, Mdm Ang could have the peace of mind knowing that she and both her children are housed within the same facility and that they are well cared for by the nursing home.

Indeed, there is no end to a mother's love. Every child's suffering is a mother's pain while every child's joy is a mother's happiness. Mdm Ang's greatest wish for her children was simple. A wish for them to remain safe, healthy and happy was more than she could ever ask for. Caring for her children is never seen as a burden for Mdm Ang, she sees it as her greatest privilege as a mother.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ADVOCATE AWARD



MS DEBORAH SEAH 38 YEARS OLD

Breaking the Social Stigma Against Mental Health Conditions

“When I was diagnosed, I felt that it was the end of my life,” says Ms Deborah Seah, as she recalls when she was first diagnosed with anxiety and bipolar disorder in 2013. It was her lowest point in life where she had lost all hopes in recovering from her mental health conditions.



Deborah’s turning point came when she was connected to a peer support specialist (PSS) working in Institute of Mental Health (IMH), who has well recovered from his mental condition. Inspired by the fact that there was someone who was able to overcome his mental health conditions and function well in society, Deborah was determined to set herself straight and get back on track for her recovery.

Since then, she has made good recovery and has been thriving in her personal life and at work. Having personally experienced the power of peer support in her own recovery journey, she decided to pay it forward by using her lived experiences to be a PSS for others and be an avid advocate for mental health. Seeking to further strengthen the peer support group in Singapore, Deborah formed the Community of Peer Support Specialists (CPSS). Tapping on the alumni network of the PSS Programme, she created a platform for certified PSS to stay connected and share relevant resources to help each other and peers who have sought their support in their recovery journey. Ultimately, Deborah aims for PSS to be united as one and advance the peer support movement for people facing mental health challenges in Singapore.

Going beyond peer support, Deborah engages in human library sessions involving members of the public and institutions such as IMH to share her recovery story with others. Not forgetting the caregivers as well, Deborah speaks of her journey at Caregiver Alliance’s Caregiver-to-Caregiver classes to give hope to caregivers that recovery is possible.

Social stigma is not new to people with mental health conditions where acceptance is difficult. People are still ashamed of their conditions and would retreat in fear, leading to social isolation. Hoping to change that at a national level, Deborah aims to raise awareness and break the stigma. In particular, Deborah is an ambassador for Beyond the Label – a national anti-stigma campaign, to garner greater acceptance of people with mental health conditions and create a community for them to fall back on.



SINGAPORE PATIENT SUPPORT GROUP / VOLUNTEER GROUP AWARD



PULMONARY HYPERTENSION SINGAPORE SUPPORT GROUP

Stronger, Together

Diagnosed with pulmonary hypertension (PH) in 2013, Mdm Haslina Wannor was unable to find much information about this rare disease then. It was through her own efforts and initiative that she was able to build her knowledge about PH over the years. Recognising that there is a lack of information about PH and on how to cope with PH for patients, Nurse Clinician Aidila Ismail of National Heart Centre Singapore (NHCS) encouraged Mdm Haslina to share her wealth of knowledge she had gained with other patients diagnosed with PH. As such, the PH Singapore Support Group was born.



This support group helps newly diagnosed patients and their caregivers better understand PH and be better prepared to face any challenges that might arise. Through a mix of patient support group activities and sharing sessions, patients are able to share their struggles and exchange tips on how to better manage PH. By providing a platform for open discussion and communication, the PH Singapore Support Group encourages openness amongst patients. Not only do patients learn and become a pillar of support for one another, they form a reliable community for members to fall back on.

Without a doubt, social stigma exists for PH. As patients, it is common to receive stares from the public when they cough excessively or when they carry an oxygen machine around to help them breathe easily. As a group, the members strive to create more awareness about PH in Singapore to reduce the stigma surrounding this condition. Since 2015, in conjunction with World PH Awareness Month, the PH Singapore Support Group organises an annual event known as the “Blue Lips Campaign”. This campaign aims to educate patients, healthcare professionals and the public about PH. Through this, the PH Singapore Support Group hopes that members of the public would be more accepting and understanding after gaining a better grasp of the disease.

It is often easy to succumb to such crippling diseases. For patient advocates like Mdm Haslina and the PH Singapore Support Group, they believe that positivity and strong peer support make it easier to win the battle against diseases like PH. Sometimes, it may only be through adversity that people come together and emerge stronger, just like the bonds formed among the volunteers in the PH Singapore Support Group.



SINGAPORE PATIENT SUPPORT GROUP / VOLUNTEER GROUP AWARD



DOVER PARK HOSPICE OPAL GROUP

Connecting Through Touch

Every Saturday afternoon, since 2013, volunteers of Dover Park Hospice (DPH) Opal Group visit the patients to sooth their pain and discomfort through massage. Consisting of a group of trained masseurs, DPH Opal Group volunteers would befriend the patients and offer massage services to ensure patients are able to relax and rest better.



Although the patients could not communicate or could only understand specific dialects, touch was a universal language that allowed these volunteers to deeply connect with these patients. Motivated to build a relationship with these patients, some volunteers went the extra mile to pay for their own training outside of the hospice to be fully equipped with the massage skills. Arranging a session involves strong coordination between the DPH clinicians and the volunteers. As the patients tend to be frailer, volunteers have to be kept well-informed of the patient's condition for the massages to be carried out in a safe manner and ensured that the massages are personalised and suited to each patient's needs.

Many patients at DPH suffer from pains and aches due to prolonged periods of bed rest, with minimal to no movement. Though simple, the volunteers' gentle act of lifting the patients, massaging and relieving the pressure off their backs provide them with much comfort and relaxation. For some, being massaged is a new sensation to them. The soothing physical touch gives them a sense of assurance and comfort, that they are not alone as they journey through the final phase of their lives. This creates a connection between the volunteer and patient where friendships blossomed and personal stories exchanged and shared.

The volunteers at DPH Opal Group believe that it is not what they can provide to help the patients on their final journey, but what the patients can give to them as well. The volunteers may seem to only provide a massage service but it is about learning from the patients and their experiences and enriching their own lives.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD



TEMASEK FOUNDATION - CENTRE FOR HEALTH ACTIVATION MOBILISES PARACLINICAL SENIORS INPATIENT TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

Empowering Volunteers with Paraclinical Skills

Total knee replacement (TKR) surgery is a procedure that involves the insertion of a metal component between a patient's knee joints, to recreate the surface of the knee joint. After the surgery, patients will receive daily physiotherapy and they will also be taught rehabilitative bed exercises to improve their knee flexibility, muscle strength and functional mobility. However, many patients struggle to carry out the prescribed bed exercises regularly and diligently because of fatigue, pain and fear of damaging the implant.



In 2018, the Temasek Foundation - Centre for Health Activation Mobilises Paraclinical Seniors (CHAMPS) Inpatient Total Knee Replacement (TKR) Programme was piloted in Tan Tock Seng Hospital. This programme empowers former TKR patients to assist patients who have just underwent TKR surgery with their rehabilitative bed exercises. By participating in lessons relating to post-operative care for TKR patients, these volunteers picked up paraclinical skills to monitor, guide and assist TKR inpatients through the necessary physical exercises.

As a holistic programme that integrates rehabilitative exercises with peer support interactions, Temasek Foundation - CHAMPS Inpatient TKR Programme has given TKR inpatients greater motivation to perform the rehabilitative exercises diligently. By having the opportunity to interact with former TKR patients, these patients also have greater confidence in carrying out the exercises both in the hospital and at home, and this greatly aids in their recovery.

To date, the programme has successfully trained 16 active volunteers who have worked hard to complete over 100 exercise sessions with more than 65 patients. With a team of volunteers who are always willing to be a part of a TKR patient's road to recovery to support new patients, this makes the TKR journey for these patients less painful. The success of the Temasek Foundation - CHAMPS Inpatient TKR programme is a strong testament of how paraclinical volunteers can now play a bigger role in partnering healthcare professionals to improve the care journeys of patients.



SINGAPORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD



PEER SUPPORT LEADERS

Building a Community of Care in Central Health

Empowering the elderly in our community to take charge of their own health can be challenging at times. As a senior, embarking on a healthy journey can be lonely and challenging. As a beacon of light for these seniors, the Peer Support Leaders (PSLs) were formed. PSLs are an extension of the multidisciplinary care teams, also known as Community Health Teams (CHTs) in Tan Tock Seng Hospital.



These activated PSLs are members of the community that were identified and trained by the Health Coaches, who are part of the CHTs, to support community wellness outreach and health related initiatives. They organise and conduct interactive activities such as exercise and cooking sessions with the aim of encouraging residents in the community to lead more active and healthier lifestyles. These initiatives might sound simple but a lot of courage and dedication are involved for PSLs to rally the residents together and raise awareness about enabling health and wellness within their own neighbourhood.

To these individuals, being a PSL goes beyond simply being a facilitator. It also means being a friend to their neighbours. Whether it is giving the residents a call to remind them about the activity that is coming up or playing games like Rummy-O with each other, PSLs build lasting friendships and bonds with the residents. These friendships are key to strengthening the *gotong royong* spirit, a spirit of cooperation, in each neighbourhood.

The PSLs believe that staying in good health even in their golden years is important. By staying well and healthy, they can look out for others as well to build a stronger and healthier community together.

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TOGETHER FOR PATIENTS

Know of any individuals and groups who have made significant contributions in enhancing the healing journey of patients?

Share their stories with us when nominations open in December 2020!

The 7th edition of the Singapore Patient Action Awards seeks to honour 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.

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