

Counting down to Hindu Festival of Lights – with lights

Little India was a blaze of brilliant lights last night, with the colours of the rainbow on dazzling display as the countdown to Deepavali begins. The Hindu Festival of Lights falls on Nov 6, but the festive lights in Tekka, as the area is also known, will remain switched on until Nov 25. This year, the Deepavali light-up features two birds flanking the Happy Deepavali greeting in English and Tamil. The birds are Indian celestial swans known as "annapatchi". President Halimah Yacob attended the event, where Mr Rajakumar Chandra, chairman of the Little India Shopkeepers and Heritage Association, spoke about the significance of Deepavali in a speech to mark the light-up.

ST PHOTO:
SYAMIL SAPARI



New hub in Tampines to meet seniors' health and social needs

It comprises two healthcare facilities and a senior care centre, for more seamless services

Lim Min Zhang

A new hub that aims to meet the health and social needs of elderly residents in the east was officially opened yesterday.

Our SilverCare Hub comprises two healthcare facilities and a senior care centre at Our Tampines Hub. Seniors can use the different facilities, which are all nearby, while benefiting from more seamless care as the different groups can share medical and other information.

While each of the three facilities has its own staff, they work closely together, providing services such as physiotherapy, dementia day-care, community rehabilitation, counselling and primary care.

Those requiring more complex or specialised care can be referred to Changi General Hospital (CGH).

The hub, which was officially opened by Finance Minister and Tampines GRC MP Heng Swee Keat, is a partnership between CGH, St Andrew's Senior Care (Tampines), the Eastern Community Health Centre and the Tampines Family Medicine Clinic.

Mr Heng said the hub is a "concrete manifestation" of the Government's efforts to partner the public and private sectors, marrying health and social care to support seniors to age well. "Our SilverCare Hub is situated within an ecosystem of health and wellness; it is side by side with the Wellness Centre and the ActiveSG gym," he added.

"The message is clear – we want to rehabilitate and provide treatment to our seniors with the eventual goal of returning them back to health and active ageing."

Adjunct Associate Professor Lee



Top: Madam Laila Kadir, who was diagnosed with osteoarthritis in both knees, joining other seniors for physiotherapy at Eastern Community Health Centre. Above: (From left) Tampines Family Medicine Clinic director Leong Choon Kit, SingHealth Regional Health System deputy group chief executive Lee Chien Earn and St Andrew's Community Hospital chief executive Loh Yik Hin at a media preview of Our SilverCare Hub last Tuesday. ST PHOTOS: KEVIN LIM

Chien Earn, deputy group chief executive of SingHealth Regional Health System, said the hub enables seniors in the east to receive comprehensive and integrated care within their community.

The hub is part of the larger system of care in Tampines and the east, which also involves groups such as grassroots organisations, voluntary welfare organisations and the Community Networks for Seniors, he added.

He said the concepts used in the setting up of the hub could be replicated at other sites in the future, although implementation may differ.

While the three facilities have been open since last year, there is now an established set of protocols to provide seniors with a seamless transition across different facilities, said Ms Yap Mei Foon, director of Integrated Care Development at CGH.

The community health centre and the family medicine clinic are located next to each other on the third floor, while the St Andrew's Senior Care centre is on the fourth floor.

The elderly can also make use of other facilities within Our Tampines Hub to keep active, such

as gardening in the community garden or playing table tennis in the auditorium.

The clinic conducts health and well-being checks, including tests on sight, hearing and eating abilities.

Information gathered can be shared between the three facilities, with the patient's consent, to enable a seamless care experience.

Dr Leong Choon Kit, director of Tampines Family Medicine Clinic, said: "With the assessment, the other partners can look at the same patient comprehensively, rather than doing the assessment three times."

This will also allow better understanding of the patient's condition over time, he added.

Former hotel chef Laila Kadir, 72, was diagnosed with osteoarthritis in both knees, and her doctor recommended she take part in day care activities at the St Andrew's Senior Care centre and physiotherapy at the community health centre.

She said she feels better and healthier after the sessions. "Before, I felt lazy and had no mood to do anything. But here, I feel happy."

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Scheme enables GPs to follow up on TTSH emergency patients

Patients who have been treated at Tan Tock Seng Hospital's (TTSH) emergency department sometimes have to wait months for a follow-up appointment with a specialist there.

But under a scheme that starts next month, patients with certain conditions could be referred to a general practitioner (GP) clinic, family medicine clinic or polyclinic near them as quickly as within a week if their condition is stable and can be managed by a GP.

GPNext will initially cover 14 medical conditions, such as lower back pain, asthma and urinary tract infection. These conditions come under five clinical specialities: urology, general surgery, orthopaedics, general medicine, and respiratory and critical care medicine.

Announced yesterday, GPNext is TTSH's collaboration with primary care partners to better manage patients with chronic but stable conditions as well as minor emergencies within the community.

Adjunct Associate Professor David Foo, the clinical lead for primary care at TTSH, said patients who have seen a doctor at the emergency department and later a GP, but still need to consult a specialist, will have their appointments expedited.

Besides GPNext, a team of 48 TTSH specialists from 20 clinical specialities was formed recently to serve as dedicated links between GPs and the hospital.

This benefits patients as the GPs can speak to the specialists about the patients' condition, rather than having to refer them to make an appointment with a specialist, which takes longer.

The Coordinating Advisory Care Team aims to empower primary care partners to manage patients with more complex needs, TTSH said.

Prof Foo said the GPs will be able to reassure the patients that their consultation is backed by expert advice. "It is really a win-win situation for the hospital, GP partners and patients, if we can consolidate the care centred around the patient."

Two other programmes started earlier by TTSH have grown over time. One enables patients from specialist outpatient clinics who have chronic but stable conditions to be cared for at GP clinics.

Under the Community Right Sitting Programme, the number of partner GPs has increased from 10 in 2014 to 120 today.

The number of conditions they can manage has also increased from three to 30. These include more common chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, ischaemic heart disease and osteoporosis.

More than 3,000 patients have benefited from the programme, saving about 12,000 trips to TTSH specialist outpatient clinics since 2014. The hospital provides training and support such as diagnostic and lab services to these partner GPs.

Another scheme for moderately stable patients was launched in April last year and has benefited 72 people so far.

Shared Care helps to reduce the number of times these patients have to return to specialist outpatient clinics, thus freeing up appointment slots and reducing the waiting time for other patients.

Dr Eng Soo Kiang of Unity Family Medicine Clinic, who has been part of the Community Right Sitting Programme for four years, said the benefits to patients include fewer unnecessary visits to emergency departments and specialists, and less burden on their caregivers.

He added: "There is also more satisfaction to the GP partners, and happier patients too."

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SUPPORT FOR SENIORS TO AGE WELL

The message is clear – we want to rehabilitate and provide treatment to our seniors with the eventual goal of returning them back to health and active ageing.



MR HENG SWEET KEAT, Finance Minister and Tampines GRC MP, on the opening of Our SilverCare Hub.