

New ward at TTSH takes a different approach for recovery

It facilitates faster discharge as patients eat and walk earlier than the norm after surgery

Ariel Yu

One new ward at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) is marching to a different beat.

Piloted since February, it encourages patients to get out of their beds to move about, and start drinking and eating earlier than the norm after surgery. It has shown that this approach enables patients to recover and get discharged more quickly.

Patients also end up paying less, generally, and their early discharge reduces the strain on the hospital system.

The Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (Eras) ward also looks different. On the floor, from one end to the other, is a decal designed to look like a running track in a sports stadium.

Near the nurses' station is a communal space where two or three patients can sit to chat and read newspapers.

Next to the communal space is an activity corner where patients are encouraged to do light exercises.

During meal times, patients can gather to eat at a common dining table set up in each cubicle near their beds.

There are 36 beds in the new ward, and 135 patients have been admitted there since February after colorectal, bariatric or breast reconstruction surgery.

Patients from urology, head and neck operations, and other general surgery have also been admitted to the Eras ward to benefit from the standardised care by Eras-trained nurses and features of the ward.

About 97.5 per cent of patients have started drinking and eating, and about 98 per cent of them have been able to get out of bed, in the first 24 hours after surgery.

Early discharge means cost savings for patients in this new ward, where charges are the same as in a normal ward.

The Eras programme itself is not new. It was introduced in 2016 to patients who underwent colorectal surgery. Subsequently, patients who had major surgery such as bariatric, breast reconstruction, urology, head and neck operations were also placed in the Eras programme.

What changed in February was that the programme was given a dedicated ward, with facilities like the track to help the patients recover faster.

Many of such patients would previously have been sent to high-dependency wards, as they require closer monitoring. But beds in high-dependency wards are now freed up, lessening the strain on hospital capacities.

Compared with patients who stay in a typical ward, the average length of stay in the Eras ward for those who had colorectal or breast reconstruction surgery has been



On the floor of Tan Tock Seng Hospital's Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (Eras) ward is a decal designed to look like a running track in a sports stadium. Priority for admission to the Eras ward has been given to those who had colorectal, bariatric or breast reconstruction surgery. ST PHOTOS: GIN TAY



During meal times, patients in the Eras ward can gather to eat at a common dining table set up near their beds. Piloted since February, the new ward has 36 beds, and charges are the same as in a normal ward.

reduced by about 25 per cent.

The average length of stay in the Eras ward for patients who underwent bariatric surgery has been reduced by 50 per cent.

Priority for admission to the Eras ward has been given to those who had these three operations.

Dr How Kwang Yeong, lead of the Eras programme and senior consultant from the department of

general surgery, said: "We choose to track and measure these three disciplines because they've got very established Eras guidelines."

He said that the team hopes to spread the concept of the Eras ward to other surgical wards at TTSH, which is under the National Healthcare Group, but this is subject to the number of elective major operations the hospital per-

forms.

"We've continued to inculcate the principles we have conducted in services so that every nurse in our surgical wards should understand what is Eras," he added.

Dr How said that the team applied the guidelines from the Eras Society, a Europe-based non-profit group that seeks to develop care before, during and after surgery, and to improve patient recovery.

Over the past eight years, nurses have been trained to care for and help patients according to Eras guidelines, specifically to encourage patients to get out of their beds sooner, and to start consuming nutritional drinks and food instead of fasting.

Housewife Jasmine Chua, 69, who had colorectal surgery to remove a cancerous growth in her colon on Aug 30, was discharged on Sept 1.

She was able to get out of bed and walk about for short distances with the help of a nurse and a physiotherapist on the morning of Aug 31. On the same day, she drank apple juice for breakfast and had some clear soup for lunch.

Traditionally, patients who undergo colorectal surgery get out of the bed only after two to three days

to move about and leave the hospital after eight days.

"I can now do some light household chores at home, such as mopping the floor," Madam Chua said.

Madam Chua's daughter, Ms Jayce Soh, 35, said: "Nurses are quite knowledgeable regarding the drugs, her recovery and nutrition information when I need to ask them. So I don't necessarily have to wait for the doctor to drop by. They are quite clear on the conditions and what we can or cannot do. I think that was very helpful."

Another patient, Mr Henry Soh, 64, who underwent a similar surgery on Feb 16, could sit up on the bed and started taking oral supplements one day after his surgery.

He could walk around the ward independently and interacted with other patients in the same ward on Feb 18. He was discharged by Feb 20, without needing medication, physiotherapy or chemotherapy.

"Dr How did a good job. He put me in the Eras ward. No need for chemotherapy or hormone therapy, no medications... I'm eating. My life is back on track. It's a good testament to tell others to not give up hope," Mr Soh said.

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News analysis

MBS' ban on ex-top executive sparks debate over persona non grata notices



Grace Leong

Senior Correspondent

The unprecedented use of a persona non grata notice by Marina Bay Sands to ban a former top casino executive from the entire integrated resort over alleged high-roller and staff poaching has raised questions about the legality and fairness of such notices.

Legal experts told The Straits Times that such a move is highly unusual, and while it does not contravene the Casino Control Act, the sweeping ban has sparked debate over whether it is too wide-ranging and whether the integrated resort is entitled to ban people from quasi-public spaces within its premises.

A quasi-public property refers to a space that is privately owned but open to public access. This could include shopping malls and lobbies of hotels and office buildings.

The Straits Times had reported on Aug 28 that Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) chief casino officer Andrew MacDonald and another RWS executive, Ms Louise Ng, were each issued persona non grata notices prohibiting them "from entering or remaining on any part of Marina Bay Sands integrated resort premises".

The ban, which took effect on July 31, would mean both

executives would not be able to enter areas "including but not limited to the hotel, mall, convention centre and casino".

MBS has not stated publicly why the two are no longer welcome, but media reports said the notices were issued over concerns that Mr MacDonald might have been attempting to poach MBS customers and staff during several visits to the property in July 2024.

Mr MacDonald, who was with MBS for nearly 12 years before joining RWS, has denied the allegations.

It is not uncommon for casinos to issue persona non grata (or unwelcome person) notices to unruly people.

In the US, American socialite Paris Hilton was banned in 2010 from two Wynn resorts - Wynn Las Vegas and Encore - on the Las Vegas Strip, after she was arrested for investigation of felony cocaine possession.

Former Batman star Ben Affleck was also banned from playing blackjack at Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas in 2014 for card counting.

Legal experts said it is well within the rights of private property owners to issue persona non grata notices.

In this latest instance, the Gambling Regulatory Authority has said the ban was a "business decision imposed by the casino operators".

Lawyer Peter Doraisamy said that besides casinos, hotels and supermarkets here have also issued persona non grata notices on individuals.

That said, Mr Doraisamy pointed out that even though commercial entities "mostly have



Mr Andrew MacDonald was with Marina Bay Sands for nearly 12 years before joining Resorts World Sentosa.

freedom to ban individuals from their private premises", owners of quasi-public spaces also need to consider whether it is fair to do so.

He added that the MBS integrated resort has all the elements of a quasi-public place, with a hotel, convention centre, casino, retail shops, theatre, public waterfront and restaurants.

The basement level features direct access to the Bayfront MRT station and underground pathways to The Shoppes, hotel and Gardens by the Bay, Mr Doraisamy said.

"Persona non grata notices can be issued by owners of private property, and this is usually a business decision that the courts would respect," he said.

He added that if an individual chooses to dispute such a prohibition by suing the issuer, the courts can decide if such a measure was wrongful.

While legal experts agreed that it is legal for MBS to impose a property-wide ban, the scope of the ban has sparked discussion.

Associate Professor Mervyn Cheong, deputy director at the Centre for Pro Bono and Clinical Legal Education at the National University of Singapore Law Faculty, said the scope of the ban against Mr MacDonald - which includes the shopping mall and the convention centre - could be

perceived to be unreasonable.

"So in a way, the persona non grata notice prohibits Mr MacDonald from even walking through The Shoppes to get to the Bayfront MRT station, or to take a taxi from the car pick-up area," he said.

Pointing to exclusion orders here - which can be issued against problem gamblers to prohibit them from entering the casinos - Prof Cheong said that while such orders are common, they typically do not prohibit entry to the wider integrated resort premises.

"Ultimately, a property owner has the right to exclude people, whom the owner considers to be undesirable or unwelcome, from the property. It will be difficult for an individual to identify a specific right that guarantees him access to the premises," said Prof Cheong.

As to whether the recent persona non grata notice imposed by MBS may lead to more property owners imposing such bans, Professor Tan Cheng Han, chief strategy officer of NUS Law Faculty and president of the Asian Law Schools Association, said this would be unlikely.

Prof Tan said mall operators will be constrained by public criticism, pointing out for instance that an establishment could face reputational harm if it banned a food reviewer because of a bad review.

"In practical terms, the prospect of bad publicity and reputational damage means that such notices will be used sparingly," he said.

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SPH Radio snags five wins at the Asia Podcast Awards 2024

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SPH Radio bagged five awards at the Asia Podcast Awards 2024 on Sept 3.

The awards, launched in 2023 by the Australian trade publication RadioInfo - which supports radio broadcasting, podcast and audio industries - recognise outstanding individuals, teams and organisations in the Asian podcasting industry.

The awards are open to independent publishers, radio companies and podcast-hosting businesses. According to its website, anyone producing a podcast for Asia or the Pacific, in any language, is eligible for the Asia Podcast Awards.

Out of 64 finalists, 26 winners received awards for podcasts on topics such as children's entertainment, education, health and wellness, money and business, news, sports and society and culture. Awards were also given to individuals for roles such as audio producer, executive producer or podcast host/presenter of the year.

Of these, Money FM 89.3 snagged three of the five awards won by SPH Radio:

- Podcast Presenter of the Year, awarded to Michelle Martin for her informative hosting style.
- Best Factual Podcast, awarded to Climate Connections for its in-depth exploration of environmental issues.
- Best Health and Wellness Podcast, awarded to Thank Fitness It's Friday for its innovative approach to promoting a healthy lifestyle.

The other two awards went to SPH Media's Chinese stations, with 96.3 Hao FM's Liang Wen Fu Music Journey receiving the Best Radio Show Podcast award, while Gen Bridge was named Best New Podcast.

The awards were presented at the Radiodays Asia 2024 conference in Kuala Lumpur.

The conference is an "international meeting point" for the radio, audio and podcast industry in the Asia-Pacific, offering opportunities to share experiences and learn about global media trends, new technology, content development and business opportunities.

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