

“AMID THE GRUELLING AND ON-GOING CHALLENGES OF THE PAST YEAR, **OUR TEAMS RESPONDED TO THE TEST OF COVID-19 WITH COURAGE, COMPASSION, AND CREATIVITY.** THIS PANDEMIC HAS SHOWN THAT WE HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CREATE SOLUTIONS AND TURN CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES. YISHUN HEALTH HAS SURVIVED WELL, DISCOVERING IN OURSELVES NEWFOUND RESILIENCE AND RESOURCEFULNESS THAT WE HAVE CHANNELLED PRODUCTIVELY TO BRING ABOUT BETTER HEALTH TO OUR POPULATION IN THE NORTH.”

Professor Chua Hong Choon

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YISHUN HEALTH



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Yishun Health's system-wide effort to contain the COVID-19 pandemic and care for patients has brought out the best in its people. Every member of Yishun Health has played an invaluable role and stepped up to keep hospital operations going and deliver quality care amid challenging times.

RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ACING THE SCREEN TEST

Throughout the crisis, Yishun Health was determined to strike a balance between caring for COVID-19 patients and those with acute conditions, as well as keeping healthcare workers safe.

On 24 January 2020, just a day after Singapore confirmed its first case of COVID-19 infection, Yishun Health's Acute & Emergency Care Centre (A&E) had already set up an Expanded Screening Wing (ESW) to manage the surge in COVID-19 cases. Five holding areas were also set up to accommodate those awaiting swab test results for discharge or admission. The ESW and holding areas played a critical role in right-siting COVID-positive patients to specially-converted COVID wards at Yishun Health or Community Isolation Facilities.

Additional steps were rolled out to protect patients visiting the A&E. Workflows and spaces were quickly reorganised to minimise interactions and infection risks between patients and staff.

The Department of Laboratory Medicine kept pace with the surge in demand for testing, by redeploying staff and adjusting work-shifts in the Molecular Diagnostics section. Eight volunteers from the National University of Singapore (NUS) Faculty of Medicine were trained and deployed in April 2020. These measures enabled the lab to increase its test-load from 120 to 800 samples per day.



Above: A/Prof Pek Wee Yang, CMB, KTPH & Yishun Health, at the KTPH Patient Safety Webinar in July 2020.

Left: An Expanded Screening Wing (ESW) at the Acute & Emergency Care Centre.



Left: Holding areas for clinically-well COVID-19 patients before they are transferred to Community Care Facilities.



COLLABORATIONS AND CONVERSIONS

To handle the clinically-well COVID-19 patients post-screening, Yishun Health collaborated with Nee Soon Sports Centre to house these patients before they were transferred to Community Care Facilities. The futsal facility was converted into a 336-bed facility for this purpose. Thirty medical staff were deployed to man the site under a collaborative agreement with Fullerton Health Group (FH). Additionally, the owner of FutsalArena@Yishun offered the premises for the same purpose while Tzu Chi Singapore opened its Humanistic Youth Centre as a conducive space for FH staff to eat, rest, and freshen up.

Multiple wards at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH) and Yishun Community Hospital (YCH) were converted into COVID-19-related and operationally ready ICU wards to cope with the surging numbers of COVID-19 cases. Yishun Health's clinicians from various departments worked closely with nursing leaders and Inpatient Services to adapt to new workflows and duties. More than 60 per cent of the wards in KTPH were progressively converted to meet the needs of the situation then – from a medical ward to a pre-swab ward, then to a mixed pre- and post-swab ward, and finally to a COVID-19-positive ward. At YCH, the team discharged its patients to the Ang Mo Kio-Thye Hua Kwan Hospital so that all its beds could be used by COVID-19 patients.



Left and above: Visitors being screened as they enter YCH. Disinfectant mats were installed at KTPH and YCH COVID-19 wards as an added measure to keep staff safe.

CRITICAL EXPANSIONS

Increasing critical care capacity and capabilities is a key priority of Yishun Health's outbreak plans. A multidisciplinary team was formed to manage an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) surge if required. The plan was implemented when the number of COVID-19 cases rose in Singapore early last year. In April 2020, KTPH's 22-bed ICU capacity was progressively increased to 90 beds by converting wards and the Post-Anaesthesia Care Unit.

One hundred and twenty nurses were mobilised in March 2020 to support the ICU. These nurses from various disciplines were trained by their ICU colleagues to look after patients requiring critical care. Some 40 doctors from other specialties were also trained on the fundamentals of ICU management, intubation, ventilator-setting, and trouble-shooting, to support the increased workload in the ICU.



Beds in the Post-Anaesthesia Care Unit were used by non-COVID-19 patients who required ICU care.

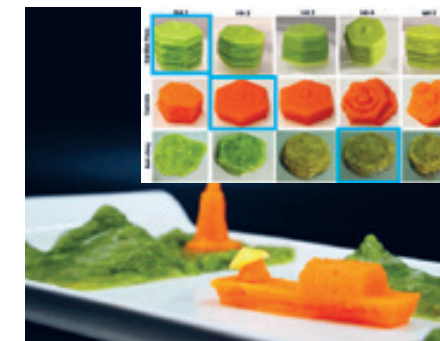


A team huddle to discuss ways to deal with the bed surge and to convert wards even before Singapore's Circuit Breaker in 2020.

COVID-19 VACCINATION PORTAL

The Human Resource Department collaborated with Operation Administration and the Staff Clinic to develop the *Safe Staff COVID-19 Vaccination* online portal that allows staff to register and complete their COVID-19 vaccination. Staff are able to declare the required personal information, book their first and second COVID-19 vaccination within the mandated 21-day period, and update critical vaccination data. The data is also captured in NHG's intranet S3 system on the same day of the vaccination, for reporting to the Ministry of Health (MOH). The portal was implemented in both Yishun Health and Woodlands Health vaccination centres.

EMPOWERING CARE AND TRAINING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY



ENABLING DIGITAL GASTRONOMY WITH 3D FOOD PRINTING

The KTPH Nutrition & Dietetics (N&D) collaborated with the National Additive Manufacturing Innovation Cluster, Singapore University of Technology and Design, and Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU) to harness 3D printing technology to create pureed food items. These 3D foods were made visually more appealing and palatable for frail and elderly patients with dementia or stroke, and who had developed chewing and swallowing difficulties. In FY2020, the N&D embarked on designing fresh plant-based food inks.

ADVANCING STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Despite disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Yishun Health continued to develop and sponsor its staff for higher education, executive education, and leadership development.

While overseas Health Manpower Development Programme (HMDP) Fellowships were suspended due to travel restrictions, it awarded 99 in-service education scholarships and sponsorships in FY2020. Nurses who embarked on the Specialist Diploma and Advance Diploma in Nursing programme with Nanyang Polytechnic in late-2019 successfully completed their courses.

In leadership development, the Mavis Khoo Nursing Leaders Scholarship for FY2020 and FY2021 was awarded to two nurses from KTPH. Yishun Health also awarded the newly-launched Community Care Nursing Leadership Programme sponsorship to two staff from YCH.

ENHANCING THE LEARNING JOURNEY

In FY2020, two major changes were implemented in courseware and training automation. First, the cluster-wide eLEARN system was upgraded in mid-June 2020 so that e-courses could be viewed with more enhanced features. The eLEARN 2.0 started with 58 trainers and 83 courses, and has since grown to 109 trainers and 150 courses/quizzes.

To further enhance the learning effectiveness and experience, Human Resource Development (HRD) partnered Nursing Education, Data Protection Office (DPO), and Office of Clinical Governance (OCG) to develop and roll out more interactive e-learning courses in eLEARN, such as the Annual PDPA Refresher 2020 series and OCG's Patient Safety Simulation.

Second, the annual Learning Needs Analysis process, which took place between September and October 2020, was fully automated with the Learning Needs Exercise (LNE) web Portal on the Intranet. The Portal achieved a 94 per cent organisation-wide submission rate and garnered positive feedback from leadership. In addition, HRD introduced core programmes online, which included e-Orientation, e-Speaking Up for Safety™ and 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

TRAINING FOR MANAGERS

In 2020, competency-based programmes for supervisors, executives, and managers were introduced at Yishun Health. About 300 staff across all family groups attended targeted managerial skills modules, such as *Driving Change, Coaching for Peak Performance and Communicating with Impact*.

Managerial Learning Journeys were also customised for emerging and promising managers in Nursing and Allied Health. Results of an internal survey showed higher team productivity and engagement with the organisation against global norms. Scores on intra-unit relationship improvement and achievement of goals increased between 27 and 33 per cent, post-training.

EARNING A FIRST-CLASS DEGREE WHILE FIGHTING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

KTPH Senior Staff Nurse Ms Bindeeya Chandran attained her first-class degree from King's College London while juggling between motherhood and working on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms Chandran was one of 70 students in Singapore who completed their part-time nursing degree courses, offered in partnership with local private institution Ngee Ann Academy, in January and March this year. Ms Chandran was motivated to pursue a nursing degree to better help palliative care patients, "I was initially uncertain about being able to cope with a part-time degree programme while working full-time as a nurse in the intensive care unit (ICU), but I was motivated to learn more about end-of-life care, as it's relevant to my job." The fact that her three-year-old son was cheering her on helped her stay the course, "He helped me to remain focused on my goal because I wanted to show him that anything is possible if you set your mind to it."



"The protection of frontliners was the single most important priority. Communication was essential to ensure staff knew they were being supported and cared for, and that we were doing everything to keep them safe. As an integrated campus, we had designed and planned for such crises – all our wards and clinical areas can be scaled according to varying needs."

Associate Professor Pek Wee Yang Chairman Medical Board, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital & Yishun Health