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Lifewise

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unusual
fruits &
vegetables
to try

< QU YUANRONG
ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE,
INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

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WITH
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EXTENDING CARE BEYOND
YOUR LOVED ONES

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NURSE CLINICIAN,
INSTITUTE OF
MENTAL HEALTH



National
Healthcare
Group

Adding years of healthy life

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STARS FOR HEALTH

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Teamwork Makes Us Happy

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Dear Nurses, Thank You!

HERE'S A BIT OF TRIVIA FOR YOU:

The first 'nurses' in Singapore were French nuns who took on nursing duties in the General Hospital at Sepoy Lines in 1885. Fast forward to the present, and there are more than 40,000 nurses and midwives in Singapore, and they make up more than half of the country's professional healthcare workforce.

The role of nurses has evolved over the decades to stay relevant in today's ever-changing healthcare landscape. In Singapore, nurses have gone on to spearhead medical research, conduct training and review policies. Nevertheless, they do so while remaining steadfast to the tenets of their profession, providing dedicated care to those who need it, and ensuring the health and well-being of their patients.

As we thank them for their tireless contributions on Nurses' Day on 1 August, *Lifewise* speaks to three families whose members share the same vocation — a mother and daughter, a married couple and a set of triplet sisters. What motivated them to take up the same profession? How do they inspire each other, and why is it a blessing to have more than one nurse in the household? Read their stories on page 10.

On page 24 and 25, two male healthcare providers tell *Lifewise* what drives them to succeed. Also, with Singapore's rapidly-ageing population, it is pertinent that we learn more about striking a balance between personal and skill mastery in caregiving for our loved ones (page 32).

But you don't always need to be a professional to care for those in need. On page 20, a senior volunteer from non-profit organisation RSVP Singapore shows how he and fellow volunteers give of their time and energy to enrich the lives of vulnerable elderly citizens.

As long as we are able to, the responsibility of keeping body and mind healthy lies with ourselves. Find out about the health benefits of unusual fruits and vegetables on page 26. Also check out three studio-based workouts (page 30) you can consider picking up. And if you are working in a hot-desking environment, make your surroundings more conducive for your psychosocial health (page 28).

Happy reading!

THE EDITORIAL TEAM



PSYCHOLOGY

YOUR SECRETS ARE EATING YOU UP INSIDE

Researchers at the Columbia University in New York have found that constantly thinking about your secrets can lead to a lower sense of well-being. Their findings were published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

The team surveyed more than 5,000 participants across the US and found that frequently thinking about their past transgressions caused them to feel unhappy and less satisfied about themselves. Productivity was also affected. “Keeping secrets can shift a person’s focus from the task at hand to their secrets, which clearly can have a detrimental effect on task performance,” said co-author Associate Professor Malia Mason.

From the study, the team collected over 13,000 different secrets and created a list of 38 most common secrets kept by participants, along with whether they have told someone or kept it private. It was found that the most common secret was telling a lie, while the secret that was most kept to themselves was about having romantic/sexual thoughts of someone other than their partner. Visit keepingsecrets.org to see the full list.



THE MOST COMMON SECRET AMONG PARTICIPANTS SHARED WAS TELLING A LIE

DIETETICS

Watch Your Diet (Soda)

Diet sodas may not be a healthier choice to sugary sodas after all, as consumption of artificially-sweetened drinks has been found to increase stroke and dementia risk. This finding, published in the American Heart Association journal *Stroke*, came after researchers from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute and the Boston University in the US surveyed more than 4,000 adults aged above 45.

The researchers examined the number of sugary beverages and artificially-sweetened soft drinks drunk by participants between 1991 and 2001, then tracked their health over the next decade.

Results showed that those who drank one to six artificially-sweetened soft drinks daily had almost thrice the risk of dementia and stroke, compared to those who consumed it less frequently. The reasons for the link remain unknown.

While sugary beverages were not found to be associated with the same risks, past studies have linked them to other health problems, including diabetes and obesity.



How Eczema Is Triggered

Eczema patients itching for a cure may see some hope with a new discovery by scientists from Newcastle University in Australia. Collaborating with pharmaceutical company Stiefel, the team confirmed that just the loss of filaggrin (a protein found in the skin barrier) is enough to trigger eczema.

Previous research conducted by the University of Dundee in Scotland had already associated the lack of filaggrin with *ichthyosis vulgaris* — an inherited dry-skin condition that causes dry, dead skin cells to accumulate in patches on the skin surface, resembling fish scales.

The team created a model of human skin that was modified to be filaggrin-deficient and found that the missing protein affected certain pathways, resulting in the same reaction experienced by eczema patients.

Their discovery is expected to pave the way for new treatments and a potential cure for eczema. “This type of research allows scientists to develop treatments that target the actual root cause of the disease, rather than just managing its symptoms. Given the level of suffering eczema causes, this is a pivotal piece of research,” said Nina Goad from the British Association of Dermatologists, who was not involved in the study.

The findings appeared in *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*.



THE LOSS OF FILAGGRIN (A PROTEIN FOUND IN THE SKIN BARRIER) IS ENOUGH TO TRIGGER ECZEMA

PSYCHIATRY

MENTAL HEALTH AND THE HEART



People with severe mental illness (SMI), such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major depression, face a higher risk of cardiovascular diseases, as the world's largest-ever meta-analysis of SMI and cardiovascular disease has shown.

Published in *World Psychiatry* and led by researchers from King's College London, this international study of 92 past studies analysed data of more than 3.2 million SMI patients and 113 million people without SMI from 16 countries across four continents. Ten per cent of SMI patients were found to have cardiovascular disease. This group also had a 78 per cent higher risk of developing the disease than mentally healthy people, and an 85 per cent higher risk of dying from the disease than people of the same age group in the general population.

Researchers have also identified factors that increase the risks, including use of anti-psychotic drugs and a higher body mass index. “People with SMI die much earlier than those without these disorders, yet the majority of these premature deaths may be preventable with care that prioritises lifestyle changes, such as exercise, better nutrition and quitting smoking, along with cautious prescribing of anti-psychotics,” said Dr Brendon Stubbs, a member of the research team.

OSTEOLOGY

KNOW TO KNOW

When you bend your knees, do they make grating, cracking or popping sounds? If you answer yes, you have audible crepitus, and you could have a higher risk of developing knee osteoarthritis — even if your joints do not hurt. The degenerative disease is a condition that develops over time, and causes pain and stiffness as cartilage and bone break off.

A three-year observational study, as detailed in the *Arthritis Care and Research* journal, was conducted on about 3,500 people who were considered high-risk for developing knee osteoarthritis. One quarter of the subjects had noisy knees but no knee pain, yet they made up 75 per cent of the cases of osteoarthritis that had developed by the end of the study period.

“Future studies that target people who have X-ray signs of osteoarthritis and who do not complain of pain but do report noisy knees hold the promise of identifying interventions that can prevent knee pain,” said lead author Assistant Professor Grace Lo from Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas.





DIETETICS

SWEET NEWS FOR DIABETICS

People with diabetes may be able to satisfy their sweet tooth — with fresh fruits. The China Kadoorie Biobank study, involving the University of Oxford, UK, the China Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences tracked the health of more than 500,000 Chinese adults, aged 30 to 79, from 10 survey sites across China for seven years.

For participants already diagnosed with diabetes prior to the study, consumption of fruits more than three days a week was associated with up to 28 per cent lower risk of developing diabetes-related complications, including stroke and kidney diseases, than those who ate fruits less than once a week. They also had a 17 per cent lower risk of dying from any cause.

Participants who did not have diabetes at the start of the study and ate fresh fruits daily had a 12 per cent lower risk of developing the disease, compared to infrequent- or non-consumers.

As the study published in *PLOS Medicine* was observational, researchers could not establish a reason for the association. However, lead author Dr Du Huaidong from the University of Oxford said that the sugar in fresh fruits may be metabolised differently from sugar in manufactured food, and fruits often contain beneficial nutrients.

ADDICTION

Watch Your Own Screen Time

A study from Illinois State University in the US has found a correlation between parents' technology addiction — such as excessive checking of phones — and their children's poor behaviour.

The study was based on a survey of 170 parents and found that participants who reported problematic or addictive use of technology had also reported interrupted relationships with their children. The “interruptions” led to children displaying behavioural problems, including crying spells and aggressiveness.

According to Professor Brandon McDaniel, who conducted the study, it is among the first of its kind to explore the effect of technology on relationships. It appeared in *Child Development* journal. “These devices are designed to absorb our attention... but we need to try to minimise those distractions, realising that your children are not always going to be little,” Prof McDaniel said.



CARDIOLOGY

From Sniffles To Serious Threat

The risk of having a heart attack has been known to rise during winter. However, it now turns out that the flu bug, and not cold weather, is to blame. A new study published in Australia's *Internal Medicine Journal* has confirmed a link between respiratory infection and cardiac arrest.

Conducted by scientists at the University of Sydney, the study comprised 578 heart-attack patients who were interviewed about what they experienced health-wise, before admission to hospital. One question was whether they had a recent flu-like illness with fever and sore throat. 17 per cent of participants reported symptoms of respiratory infection within a week of the heart attack, and 21 per cent within 31 days.

Scientists concluded that the risk of suffering a heart attack increases by 13 times for flu patients, and 17 times for those with more severe respiratory illnesses like the flu, bronchitis and pneumonia. While the risk peaks in the first week of getting infected and gradually reduces, it remains elevated for a month.

“Possible reasons for why respiratory infection may trigger a heart attack include an increased tendency towards blood clotting, inflammation and toxins damaging blood vessels, and changes in blood flow,” said the research's senior author Professor Geoffrey Tofler.





GASTROENTEROLOGY

HAPPY GUT, HAPPY MIND

Take some yoghurt the next time an upset tummy sets you down. Researchers have discovered that probiotics in the dairy product may alleviate both the stomach discomfort and your blues as well.

A team from McMaster University in Canada analysed 44 adults with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and moderate anxiety or depression over 10 weeks. Half of the participants were given a daily dose of a probiotic called *Bifidobacterium longum* NCC3001, while the other half had a placebo. After six weeks, more than 60 per cent of those taking the probiotic had a reduced depression score compared to just 32 per cent in the placebo group. At the end of 10 weeks, the probiotic group also reported an overall improvement in their quality of life.

Participants' functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans showed that the improvement in depression scores was associated with changes in multiple brain areas that affect mood control. "This opens new avenues not only for the treatment of patients with functional bowel disorders but also for patients with primary psychiatric diseases," said senior author Dr Premysl Bercik.

The study was published in *Gastroenterology* journal by the American Gastroenterological Association. Researchers noted that larger-scale trials will be needed to confirm the results of this pilot study.



**RESEARCHERS
HAVE DISCOVERED
THAT PROBIOTICS
IN YOGHURT
MAY ALLEVIATE
BOTH STOMACH
DISCOMFORT AND
YOUR BLUES**

NUTRITION

Free From Gluten... But Not Fat

Gluten-free diets may be a health trend, but experts are cautioning against hopping on the bandwagon. Presenting their findings at the annual meeting of the European Society for Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition in the Czech Republic, they warned that gluten-free foods are typically more energy-dense and have poorer nutritional value.

The Spanish team from the Instituto de Investigación Sanitaria La Fe had compared 655 conventional food products to 654 gluten-free alternatives from 25 brands across 14 food categories, including bread, breakfast cereal and pasta. They found that:

- ▶▶ **Gluten-free bread loaves had more than double the amount of fat but three times less protein**
- ▶▶ **Gluten-free biscuits had higher levels of fat and less protein**
- ▶▶ **Gluten-free pasta had significantly lower content of both sugar and protein**

Gluten, a mixture of proteins found in cereal grains, causes inflammation in the small intestine of coeliac disease patients. "As more and more people are following a gluten-free diet to effectively manage coeliac disease, it is imperative that foods marketed as substitutes are reformulated to ensure that they truly do have similar nutritional values," said lead researcher Dr Joaquim Calvo Lerma. He also urged consumers to check food labels and not equate 'gluten-free' with 'healthy'.





CARDIOLOGY

HEART TRUTH FOR SOCIAL SMOKERS

People who have an occasional puff may think it's a harmless indulgence, but a recent study has found that smoking takes the same toll on cardiovascular health regardless of the frequency.

US researchers from Ohio State University College of Nursing in Columbus examined data on the smoking habits, cholesterol levels and blood pressure of 39,555 adults, of which 17 per cent were smokers and about 10 per cent were social smokers (those who take a puff when in social situations instead of daily).

After adjusting for demographic and biometric differences between the two groups of smokers, researchers found no difference in the risk of hypertension or high cholesterol. Compared to non-smokers, social smokers were also more than twice as likely to have high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol levels.

Noting the danger of social smoking, researchers advised clinicians assessing patients' health risk to ask "Do you ever smoke cigarettes in social situations such as at bars, parties, work events or gatherings?" instead of "Are you a smoker?" — as social smokers are likely to reply "no" to the latter.

Researchers highlighted limitations to the study, such as other underlying conditions that may have contributed to chronic high blood pressure in participants. Lead author Dr Kate Gawlik reiterated that "Not smoking at all is the best way to go." The study was published in *American Journal of Health Promotion*.



SOCIAL SMOKERS WERE MORE THAN TWICE AS LIKELY TO HAVE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND ELEVATED CHOLESTEROL LEVELS COMPARED TO NON-SMOKERS



SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY

Just Swear It

Swearing might just give you that extra boost during workouts. It worked at least for participants in two experiments conducted by researchers at the University of Keele in the UK.

The first test saw 29 participants pedalling on an exercise bike while repeatedly saying either a swear word that came naturally to them, or a neutral word. The second test examined the handgrip strength of 52 participants who also either swore or uttered a neutral word. Results showed that those who cursed displayed an average 24-watt increase in peak power, as well as an average 2.1-kilogramme increase in grip strength.

This study was a follow-up on the team's earlier research in 2009, which found that swearing increases people's pain tolerance. Lead author Dr Richard Stephens inferred, "Pain perception and pain relief are quite complex things. Swear words have a distracting effect... If you're asked to squeeze a hand gripper as hard as you can, there's a certain amount of discomfort and it could be that this is reduced by being distracted."

PHARMACOLOGY

SHORTCUT TO FITNESS

Diligent gym-goers may find this a tough pill to swallow. Researchers have developed a new drug that can increase athletic endurance without requiring any exercise or training. The drug, called GW501516, was found to chemically activate a genetic pathway or muscle proteins called PPAR δ , which is triggered by physical activity.

In the study published in the *Cell Metabolism* journal, two groups of mice underwent a series of treadmill tests. Researchers found that mice on the drug for eight weeks could run about 270 minutes before exhaustion, while those in the control group lasted 160 minutes – or about 70 per cent shorter. There were no observed changes to the muscles of mice that had the drug, but they were found to put on less weight and had better controlled blood sugar levels.

One of the study authors Michael Downes said that the findings could bring health benefits to those who have limited mobility, such as the elderly and obese. “We think this drug should never be used to gain a competitive advantage in any sport, but believe it has great potential to combat skeletal muscular diseases,” said Downes, who is a scientist at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in California.



RESEARCHERS THINK THIS DRUG HAS GREAT POTENTIAL TO COMBAT SKELETAL MUSCULAR DISEASES



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FAMILY OF NURSES

FROM LEFT:
MS PEILING SIM,
MS ADELINE SIM
AND MS JOANNE SIM



WE ARE FAMILY

SINGAPORE IS HOME TO NEARLY 35,000 PRACTISING NURSES*, BUT WHAT ARE THE ODDS OF HAVING MORE THAN ONE IN THE FAMILY? AS WE CELEBRATE SINGAPORE NURSES' DAY ON 1 AUGUST, *LIFEWISE* MEETS THREE FAMILIES WHERE NURSING AND A PASSION TO HELP OTHERS RUN IN THE BLOOD.

BY **ASHUTOSH RAVIKRISHNAN**

*As of 2016, according to Health Manpower statistics, Ministry of Health

Seeing TRIPLE

T **HERE WAS ONCE** when Ms Adeline Sim, a Senior Staff Nurse at the National Skin Centre (NSC), was preparing a patient for treatment when the latter peered at her in puzzlement and asked, “Weren’t you at the eye clinic yesterday?” “That was my sister Peiling,” recounts Adeline. “When I told the patient that I was a triplet and that my sisters were nurses too, he was astounded.”

However, for Adeline and her sisters Joanne and Peiling, it was no surprise that they ended up in nursing. “We went to the same schools and have similar hobbies. We also joined the same co-curricular activity in school: St John Ambulance Brigade,” says Joanne, the oldest of the trio. Their early exposure to first-aid and life-saving inspired them to take up nursing 11 years ago. “I can’t remember exactly when we told each other (about wanting to become nurses), but I knew that we were all supportive of one another,” says Adeline, who was born one minute after Joanne.

Sharing Knowledge

The sisters ventured down different paths after graduation. Joanne and Peiling joined outpatient clinics at the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC), while Adeline opted to work at NSC. “We had wanted to work together but it wasn’t possible because of job opportunities then,” says Joanne.

After a nine-month stint at NSC’s General Clinic, Adeline now works at the institution’s Aesthetics Clinic. Here, she assists doctors in minor surgeries and prepares patients for their treatment, and ensures the clinic runs smoothly. Her nine years at NSC have taught her a lot about skin and dermatological care.

Adeline recalls one instance when a doctor asked for her opinion on a case. “I suggested that it could be a cancerous growth — and it turned out to be one,” she says. Such moments have validated her decision to become a nurse. “I know that I’m making a difference to people’s lives every day.”

The nature of her work means that she is the de facto ‘skin specialist’ in the Sim household. “I recently asked Adeline for her advice regarding my eczema and she recommended a cream to treat my condition,” says Peiling. This exchange of expertise among the trio is a common occurrence, with Adeline turning to the other two when she was concerned about a twitch in her eye.

To the sisters, sharing knowledge is one of the most rewarding aspects of being a nurse. “It’s so satisfying to have patients who come in not knowing a thing about eye health but leave the centre understanding the importance of good eye care,” says Joanne, for whom patient interaction is the favourite part of her job. Peiling adds that educating her relatives-in-law about their eye conditions has bonded them more.

MS ADELINE SIM (CENTRE), SENIOR STAFF NURSE WITH NATIONAL SKIN CENTRE;
MS JOANNE SIM (LEFT), STAFF NURSE, AND
MS PEILING SIM (RIGHT), SENIOR ENROLLED NURSE, BOTH AT SINGAPORE NATIONAL EYE CENTRE, 31.

AS NURSES, IT’S IMPORTANT TO CONTINUE LEARNING AND STAY RELEVANT, BECAUSE PROCEDURES DO CHANGE AND EVOLVE OVER TIME.

MS ADELINE SIM, SENIOR STAFF NURSE, NATIONAL SKIN CENTRE

Going The Distance

All three sisters aspire to further their careers. “It’s heartening to know that our organisations are constantly encouraging us to improve and upgrade our skills,” says Joanne, whose Diploma in Nursing was sponsored by SNEC. In 2012, with funding and support from NSC, Adeline pursued a part-time Bachelor’s degree in Nursing offered by Curtin University. “As nurses, it’s important to continue learning and stay relevant, because procedures do change and evolve over time,” she says.

For now, Adeline is focused on raising her 16 month-old son, and she knows she can count on her sisters for that extra dose of support. “We gather at our mum’s place every Saturday where my sisters spend time playing with, and teaching my son,” she says. “That’s what families are for — they are always here for you.”



MR ZHENG HE,
NURSE CLINICIAN, AND
MS QU YUANRONG,
ADVANCED PRACTICE
NURSE, BOTH 35 AND
WITH THE INSTITUTE
OF MENTAL HEALTH.



PHOTO: CHEE YAN HAIR & MAKE UP: BRENDA LYE STYLING: SHEH CLOTHES (ON HER) BY MARKS & SPENCER

MARRIED To The Work – And Each Other

A S A TEENAGER, Ms Qu Yuanrong always found science fascinating. “Biology, pharmaceuticals, chemistry — these were things that I wanted to learn more about,” she says, explaining why she decided to become a nurse. To Mr Zheng He, it was simply the desire to help people that made him take up nursing. “Growing up, I saw how helpful nurses were and the impact they have on the community,” he says.

Despite joining the profession for different reasons in the mid-2000s, fate intervened

and both Mr Zheng and Ms Qu wound up working at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH). Their respective roles at work highlight the diversity of pathways that a nursing career now offers. “As an Advanced Practice Nurse (APN), I’m involved in research and daily ward rounds,” says Ms Qu. APNs are also trained to run APN-led outpatient clinics, initiate non-drug treatments and provide psychoeducation to patients and their families. On the other hand,

Mr Zheng takes on a more supervisory role as a Nurse Clinician. “I manage patients, staff and equipment,” he explains. “This holistic approach ensures that patients receive quality care and that new nurses are trained to meet clinical standards.”

The two initially had contrasting opinions about working in a mental healthcare setting. Mr Zheng recalls that he was excited, seeing the opportunity as a challenge to grow as a healthcare professional. However, Ms Qu approached her posting with some apprehension. “My idea of a mental health institution was shaped by the movies, so I expected dark rooms with grilles on the doors,” she says. Fortunately, it only took a day for those misconceptions to be dispelled. “During orientation, I saw that it was nothing like what I thought it would be.”

Her experience has strengthened her resolve to use

AS A PSYCHIATRIC NURSE, I AM ABLE TO BETTER SUPPORT THE WELL-BEING OF MY CHILD AND HUSBAND, AS WELL AS MYSELF.

MS QU YUANRONG, ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE, INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH



her position as a nurse to fight the stigma attached to mental illness. “We don’t just interact with patients — we also talk to their families and members of the public. Each conversation is a chance to change stereotypical perceptions of mental illness,” says Ms Qu. Adds Mr Zheng, “Sometimes, family members don’t understand much about their loved one’s mental condition. By simply talking to them, we can make a difference.”

Wedding Bells

The close-knit nature of IMH’s nursing community presented the pair with many opportunities for their paths to cross, be it at company events or informal gatherings. “IMH is a big hospital but we found ourselves running into each other a lot,” says Mr Zheng with a laugh. They got to know each other better and discovered shared common interests like a passion for travel and Mandopop concerts. Their relationship gradually deepened and Mr Zheng eventually popped the question five years ago. They now have a two year-old son.

Although their love story could be the stuff of movies, the couple say it is not uncommon for nurses within their social circle to get hitched to fellow nurses. “Working together made it a lot easier for us to meet each other when we were

dating,” says Ms Qu. Her husband adds, “As spouses, it helps that we understand the nature and demands of each other’s jobs.”

Working shifts may be one of the most trying aspects of the nursing profession, but Ms Qu—who works regular hours — claims this has proven to be a blessing in disguise. “It has positively contributed to our parenting responsibilities,” she says. “My husband’s working hours are more flexible than mine, so he can accompany our son to his doctor’s appointments and vaccinations.” However, Mr Zheng points out juggling shifts also means that he has to make a conscious effort to spend quality time with his wife.



NOT JUST A WOMAN’S WORLD

There is a misconception that nursing is a female-dominated profession, where men only do ‘grunt’ work, like carrying patients. Mr Zheng begs to differ, “Male nurses can provide the same level of care that female nurses offer to patients. And as Mr Zheng proves, they can also be effective leaders of nursing teams.

More men are taking up nursing in Singapore, according to reports from the Ministry of Health. In 2013, there were 3,231 male nurses in Singapore, an increase of about 60 per cent from 2009.

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

The Lifewise guide to different types of nurses in Singapore:

- **Staff, Registered and Enrolled** nurses provide direct care to patients and their families. Enrolled nurses must have at least a Nitec in Nursing, while Registered and Staff nurses require at least a Diploma in Nursing.
- **Nurse Clinicians** lead and evaluate patient care to ensure standards of care are met.
- **Advanced Practice Nurses (APN)** have completed a Master’s Degree in Nursing and can run APN-led clinics independently, order tests as well as manage patients with stable chronic conditions like diabetes, stroke and mental illnesses.
- **Nurse Educators** nurture aspiring nurses. They can choose to develop and implement education and training programmes in hospitals, or become nursing lecturers at educational institutions.
- **Nurse Managers** oversee wards and outpatient clinics. They ensure the professional and personal development of their teams and also create a positive working environment for them.

SOURCE: Ministry of Health

“I try to have at least one Saturday or Sunday off every week. That way, we can still do things that we enjoy — watching movies, singing *karaoke* and exercising together.”

Learning On The Job

The importance of exercise is something the couple are conscious of, given their line of work. “We know how prolonged stress can affect our mental well-being, so we try to find healthy ways to de-stress,” says Mr Zheng, adding that communication with family and friends is his go-to method for stress management. On the other hand, Ms Qu prefers to unwind by leaving work behind when she leaves the hospital. “It can be difficult to detach myself from my patients and their situations, but I remind myself that it’s the professional thing to do.”

Having worked at IMH’s children’s ward, Ms Qu is aware of mental conditions that affect young ones like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

She is grateful that her career has taught her more about mental health and symptoms. “I am able to better support the well-being of my child and husband, as well as myself,” she says.

ROOM TO GROW

A nurse's education does not end in school. Nurses can continue to develop professionally by pursuing one of the following career tracks:

MANAGEMENT

- ▶▶ Manpower resourcing, planning and retention.
- ▶▶ Job evaluation and redesign.
- ▶▶ Policy review.

EDUCATION (Healthcare Institution)

- ▶▶ Manage the training and development of nurses.
- ▶▶ Plan, deliver and evaluate nursing programmes and courses.

EDUCATION (Academia)

- ▶▶ Plan, design and evaluate nursing curricula and teaching methodologies.
- ▶▶ Conduct lectures, tutorials and exams.

CLINICAL

- ▶▶ Manage acute and chronic illnesses.
- ▶▶ Initiate, implement and evaluate treatment plans.
- ▶▶ Assist in the training of nurses and healthcare staff.

RESEARCH

- ▶▶ Initiate and champion nursing research.
- ▶▶ Facilitate research efforts of nurses with healthcare partners.

These expanded pathways showcase how nurses can enrich the healthcare landscape. Other initiatives that the Government has rolled out to attract Singaporeans to take up nursing include enhanced salary schemes, scholarships and training grants.

SOURCE: Ministry of Health

Like MOTHER, Like DAUGHTER

MS MARILYN WAN was 15 when the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) broke out in Singapore in 2003. As the outbreak spread, a lack of information about the disease created an atmosphere of fear and panic among the public. In spite of this, her mother Mdm Irene Lye dutifully headed to work at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), then designated as Singapore's screening and treatment centre for the disease.

"I remember Marilyn asking me at the time, 'Why are you still working when everyone is frightened and staying away from TTSH?'" recalls Mdm Lye, who has been a nurse for 40 years.

Ms Wan still remembers her mother's reply. "My mum said, 'Somebody has to do the job and I want to contribute what I can.' Her words made me appreciate what nursing embodied," she tells *Lifewise*.

Thus, it is hardly surprising that when the time came for Ms Wan to make a decision about her career 12 years ago, she decided to follow in her mother's footsteps. Mdm Lye did not discourage her daughter, but was emphatic that Ms Wan enter the profession for the right reasons. "Nursing isn't just a 9-to-5 job — it requires a lot of commitment, compassion and patience to keep going," she says. "I didn't want Marilyn to enrol thinking this was a glamorous job, only to

give up halfway because it was too demanding."

However, Ms Wan had no such misconceptions — having a nurse for a mother opened her eyes to both the ups and downs of the profession. "I saw the challenges — like the SARS period — but I also saw the immense job satisfaction that nursing gives her," she says. When she learnt that her daughter's mind was made up, Mdm Lye promised her unconditional support.

With her mother's blessing, Ms Wan pursued a Diploma in Nursing, followed by an Advanced Diploma in Nursing (Critical Care), and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Mdm Lye's husband and two other children were equally thrilled to have another healthcare professional in the family. "They would often jokingly say, 'If Mum isn't around to help with a medical situation, we can turn to Sis!'" says Mdm Lye.

A Tale Of Two Careers

Entering the nursing sector more than 30 years apart meant that mother and daughter have had varying professional experiences.

MDM IRENE LYE,
60, SENIOR NURSE
MANAGER, AND
MS MARILYN WAN,
29, SENIOR STAFF NURSE,
BOTH WITH TAN TOCK
SENG HOSPITAL.



WHEN MY DAUGHTER TOLD ME THAT SHE WANTED TO BECOME A NURSE, I SHARED WITH HER THE MANY CHALLENGES OF THE JOB — NOT TO DISCOURAGE HER, BUT TO HELP HER MAKE AN INFORMED CHOICE.

MDM IRENE LYE, SENIOR NURSE MANAGER,
TAN TOCK SENG HOSPITAL



PHOTOS: CHEE YAN

Mdm Lye started off as a State Registered Nurse in the UK, and has a Master's of Arts Degree in Customer Service Management. In those days, there was none of the professional tracks available to nurses today. "Back then, nursing was a day-to-day job, not a career that we could develop through defined career tracks," she says. "At most, nurses could choose a medical specialty to work within."

Times have changed and entrants to nursing are now offered a variety of career paths, subject to their interests, talents and qualifications. Ms Wan was attracted to the Education track, which allows her to groom the next generation of nurses. In this role, she mentors nursing students through their attachments at TTSH, teaching them how to care for patients and carry out clinical procedures. "It provides a different kind of satisfaction from pure clinical work, but I enjoy it," she

says. "Education creates value for more than just patients — it also advances nursing by instilling the right attitudes in future professionals."

Watching her daughter train other nurses is a proud moment for Mdm Lye. As a Senior Nurse Manager managing various clinics, supporting cardiology, general medicine, medical oncology and haematology, she too nurtures nurses, albeit in another manner. She is responsible for drawing out their full potential through training and career development— and imparts her knowledge to non-nursing staff as well. "I encourage, identify and provide opportunities for Patient Service Associates (PSAs) to learn basic clinical skills like venepuncture," she explains. For her exemplary leadership, Mdm Lye received the PS21 Distinguished Star Manager Award at this year's Excellence in Public Service Awards.

Maternal Role

Despite her successful career, Mdm Lye says that the role she cherishes the most is still that of being a mother. Working in the same hospital allows her to spend time with her daughter over meal breaks. Ms Wan appreciates these sessions as they give her a chance to discuss the daily challenges of work. "My mum has a wealth of experience that I can tap on and learn from," she says. Sometimes, however, the roles are reversed and Mdm Lye turns to her daughter for support. "Before Marilyn became a nurse, I would talk to my husband about challenges at work. He would simply listen, often not fully understanding what was being said. Now that my daughter is a nurse as well, I can go to her, reassured that she knows what I'm talking about," she says. How would she feel if her grandchild were to follow suit and become a nurse as well? "The more the merrier," says Mdm Lye. **LW**

THE STIGMA ATTACHED to those suffering from mental illness is something that — unfortunately — is all too real even today. People with mental health conditions are oft-perceived as unpredictable, incompetent and violent. If you are someone who suffers from anxiety disorder, depression or any other mental condition, the feeling of embarrassment or stress may deter you from seeking help at a hospital or the Institute of Mental Health (IMH).

Recognising the fear that some patients may have of being identified or labelled as a ‘mental patient’, IMH opened its first Community Wellness Clinic (CWC) in Geylang Polyclinic in 2003; the second one in Queenstown Polyclinic followed in 2008. “Besides lessening the stigma associated with mental health, these services were brought into the community to enhance accessibility and provide timely interventions for patients,” explains Dr Wei Ker-Chiah, Chief of the Department of Community Psychiatry at IMH.

According to the Singapore Mental Health Study (SMHS) conducted in 2010 and spearheaded by IMH, one in 10 people in Singapore suffers from some form of mental illness, and the majority are not seeking treatment.

One-Stop Help Centres

Located in the heart of the community, the CWCs are managed by a multi-disciplinary group of specialists comprising psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists, community psychiatric nurses, counsellors, medical social workers and case managers. They provide comprehensive, integrated and targeted community care for the treatment and rehabilitation of common mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety disorders. “We hope that by offering these services in a more reassuring environment, patients will be more encouraged to seek help and treatment when required,” says Dr Wei.

The CWCs’ close proximity to other healthcare services also ensures better management of patients’ medical conditions. The SMHS found that comorbidity exists between mental disorders and chronic illnesses — 14.3 per cent of patients with a chronic disease had a mental illness, while 50.6 per cent of those with mental illness had a chronic disease. This probably explains why a large number of referrals come from polyclinics.

According to Dr Wei, around 67 per cent of CWC patients are referred to the CWCs by the National Healthcare Group-run Geylang and Queenstown Polyclinics, including direct urgent requests. Cases



For
those in
NEED

**MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IS MADE
MORE ACCESSIBLE WITH COMMUNITY
WELLNESS CLINICS BY THE
INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH.**

BY DENNIS YIN IN CONSULTATION WITH
DR WEI KER-CHIAH
CHIEF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PSYCHIATRY //
INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

from other polyclinics are referred to their own in-house mental health clinics or IMH.

Come As You Are

To date, seven out of the 18 polyclinics in Singapore offer mental health services, including dementia care services. But IMH's CWCs are the only clinics at present that accept both walk-ins and referrals. Walk-in patients, though, must make an appointment with the clinics first.

Anyone aged 19 and above who might be suffering from any mental health issues can visit these two clinics for assessment and treatment. However, those experiencing a crisis episode, such as a serious panic attack, should head directly to the 24-hour IMH Emergency Services for immediate help and assistance.

Continued Expansion

The provision of mental health care services in the community is bearing fruit. The number of patients treated at the CWC in Geylang and Queenstown Polyclinics has increased steadily over the years. In 2015, Geylang CWC and Queenstown CWC saw about 2,900 and 4,700 patients respectively. The numbers increased to about 3,000 and 5,000 respectively in the following year. "By focusing on prevention and creating more awareness of mental health issues and avenues of help, we can address the needs of patients earlier. We can also detect and manage problems before they become more severe," says Dr Wei.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Agency of Integrated Care (AIC) announced earlier this year that by 2021, one in two polyclinics will have mental health or dementia clinics, or both. This is part of MOH's plan to strengthen community mental health care and increase its accessibility to the public. **LW**

WHERE THEY ARE

▶▶ COMMUNITY WELLNESS CLINIC, GEYLANG

21 Geylang East Central, Singapore 389707

▶▶ COMMUNITY WELLNESS CLINIC, QUEENSTOWN

580 Stirling Road, Level 4, Singapore 148958

Both CWCs open Mon, Tue and Thu, 8am to 5.30pm; Wed, 8am to 1pm; Fri, 8am to 5pm.

IN AN EMERGENCY

Call the **IMH EMERGENCY HOTLINE** at **6389-2003/4**, or go straight to the IMH 24-hour Emergency Services at IMH, Buangkok Green Medical Park, 10 Buangkok View, Singapore 539747.

More Than Just A Feeling

Visit the CWC and speak with a specialist when the following affects your quality of life*:



● GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER

This condition is characterised by constant worry, fear and concern. You will experience shortness of breath sometimes, and your heart may beat very fast. Symptoms can last all day. A person is diagnosed with this disorder if the condition recurs for six months.

● PANIC ATTACK

Symptoms, including shortness of breath, heart palpitations and nausea, are intense but short-lived. They last about 10 minutes each time, and can occur once or twice a day, or every morning when you wake up. Those who have experienced a panic attack describe it as "though you are going to die".

● PHOBIA

The extreme or irrational fear of something, such as the fear of insects (entomophobia), fear of open spaces (agoraphobia), fear of people not of your own kind (xenophobia) or fear of heights (acrophobia). Phobia is the most common anxiety disorder among people living in Singapore.

● SOCIAL PHOBIA

People suffering from this condition are extremely uncomfortable in social situations and will go to great lengths to avoid such events. They feel that they are being scrutinised by others.

● POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

This occurs due to overwhelming stress from a dramatic event such as a natural disaster, physical or sexual abuse, or seeing a loved one die in an accident. People seldom complain about this condition unless a psychiatrist asks about the symptoms.

● OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

The need to check things or perform certain routines repeatedly. This is an under-diagnosed anxiety disorder condition.

* A person with anxiety disorder can suffer from one or more of these ailments at the same time.



Are you HEP aware?

HEPATITIS HAS INFECTED MORE THAN TWO BILLION PEOPLE WORLDWIDE — WITH THE VAST MAJORITY UNAWARE THEY HAVE THE DISEASE. HERE'S HOW TO STAY SAFE.

BY **ELISABETH LEE** IN CONSULTATION WITH
DR KALAIYARASI KALIYAPERUMAL CONSULTANT //
GASTROENTEROLOGY AND HEPATOLOGY DEPARTMENT //
TAN TOCK SENG HOSPITAL

THE GOAL OF THIS YEAR'S World Hepatitis Day on 28 July is “noHEP” — a comprehensive, global plan to eliminate viral hepatitis by 2030 through strengthening health coverage worldwide, improving public health services and increasing awareness of prevention strategies.

This call to concerted action is prompted by the fact that each year, viral hepatitis causes 1.34 million deaths globally, and that the 325 million people presently living with the disease — if not treated — could eventually experience liver disease, cirrhosis or liver cancer. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 57 per cent of cases of liver cirrhosis and 78 per cent of cases of primary liver cancer are the result of a hepatitis B or C virus infection.

The WHO states that the global burden of the disease (and its complications) is responsible for about 2.7 per cent of all deaths — and that this number is expected to grow over the next two decades.



Hepatitis B (HBV) is transmitted via blood, unprotected sex and perinatally (from mother to baby).



Hepatitis C (HCV) is also mainly transmitted via blood — such as when sharing needles with a HCV-infected person.

“Both HBV and HCV can cause acute illness with nausea, vomiting, flu-like symptoms and loss of appetite,” says Dr Kalaiyarasi Kaliyaperumal, Consultant at the Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH). “However, while some patients may develop antibodies and recover, others may progress onto a chronic carrier/infection stage. The chance of developing chronic HCV infection is greater than developing chronic HBV infection.”

What Is Viral Hepatitis?

Hepatitis A (HAV) is transmitted through contaminated water and food sources. This is often an acute infection, but self-limiting, with most patients making a full recovery after the initial infection. Elderly and immunocompromised patients are most at risk of complications such as organ damage and may require hospitalisation. Once infected, patients develop antibodies to HAV and do not become carriers.



Hepatitis D (HDV) is only transmitted in the presence of HBV, and patients are either infected simultaneously or HDV infection occurs after an initial HBV infection.

Hepatitis E (HEV) is also transmitted along a faecal-oral route, much like HAV, except that it can cause a serious infection in pregnant women and is associated with a clinical syndrome called fulminant liver failure.



It is possible to be infected with one of the hepatitis viruses and not be aware of it, says Dr Kaliyaperumal. “Only acute hepatitis infection is symptomatic. Chronic HBV and HCV infections are largely asymptomatic unless the patient develops complications like liver cirrhosis and liver cancer.”

People who have chronic HBV or HCV infections but do not display symptoms are considered carriers. “These patients need regular follow-up with a doctor for blood tests and ultrasound scan of the liver, to prevent further complications,” advises Dr Kaliyaperumal. HBV infections can and do run in the family, so immediate family members of a chronic HBV patient should undergo testing and get immunised if possible.

Protect Yourself

For those who have yet to be infected, there is a great way to prevent viral HAV and HBV infections — get vaccinated. There is no vaccine for HCV yet.

Prior to a HAV vaccination, blood screening may be necessary. The vaccination consists of two doses which are given six months apart.

Pre-vaccination HBV screening is compulsory. The vaccination is given in three doses over a period of six months. Some people may need a fourth dose (or more) to build up adequate immunity to the disease.

There is also a HAV/B combined vaccine, which also requires pre-vaccination screening and is delivered on the same schedule as the HBV vaccine.

Another way to prevent HAV infection is by practising good hygiene, especially when travelling to developing countries or if you have chronic liver disease. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after meals, ensure that shellfish is cooked properly before consumption (and only purchase shellfish from reputable places), and handle food with care.

ANOTHER WAY TO PREVENT HAV INFECTION IS BY PRACTISING GOOD HYGIENE, ESPECIALLY WHEN TRAVELLING TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OR IF YOU HAVE CHRONIC LIVER DISEASE.

DR KALAIYARASI KALIYAPERUMAL, CONSULTANT, DEPARTMENT OF GASTROENTEROLOGY AND HEPATOLOGY, TAN TOCK SENG HOSPITAL

To prevent HBV and HCV, needles, sharp instruments as well as toothbrushes should not be shared. Do not have unprotected sex, and use a barrier method (such as a condom) during sex. Looking to have acupuncture, a body piercing or a tattoo? Make sure you visit only licensed and reputable operators. HBV carriers should take these precautions as well, to avoid transmitting the infection. Carriers should not donate blood, semen or organs. **LW**

Love Your Liver



The liver is one of the largest organs in the body — it weighs about 1.4kg on average.

Tucked away under the ribs, mostly in the right upper abdomen, the liver comprises two lobes containing cells that help to process and detoxify the blood that passes through it. These cells also help to produce proteins to help in blood clotting, and to metabolise fats, proteins and carbohydrates.

Hepatitis occurs when the liver is inflamed. This is most commonly due to a viral infection of one of the various hepatitis strains. Other causes include other viral infections (such as dengue or typhoid), excessive alcohol consumption, drug abuse or overdose. Infection can also be the result of an autoimmune system response.

Complications arising from an infection include it developing into chronic hepatitis — which in turn can lead to cirrhosis (permanent scarring of the liver tissue), hepatocellular carcinoma (liver cancer) and death.

T WICE A WEEK, Telok Blangah resident Mr Lim Bock Seng makes

a 64-minute journey by train to Woodlands to spend time with some senior citizens in their homes. It is indeed kind of him to do so, but these visits are all the more special because Mr Lim himself is a senior. At 63, he is at the younger end of the spectrum.

As a befriender, he lends a listening ear to the people he



Mr Lim visits 10 seniors at least once a month, and spends between 30 minutes and two hours with each of them.

EVERGREEN do-gooders

visits, most of whom are in their 80s. “They mostly talk about their lives, their children and their illness,” says the retired civil servant matter-of-factly. Currently, he visits about 10 people at least once a month.

Having done outreach work since 2014, Mr Lim has come to notice certain characteristics about his elderly charges. They would often look gloomy and depressed when he arrives at their homes. However, by the end of their chit-chat session — which could last anywhere between 30 minutes and two hours — their mood would have lightened considerably. He feels rewarded and satisfied when the elderly request that he visits them again.

Buddy Factor

Mr Lim is part of MyBuddy, a befriender programme that brings volunteers like him together with elderly people identified by Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH) as being regular patients who would benefit from increased social interaction. The programme is a tie-up between the hospital and RSVP Singapore,

SENIOR VOLUNTEERS ARE VALUED BY HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS ALIKE BECAUSE THEY BRING A SPECIAL SET OF SKILLS — ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO HELPING OTHER ELDERLY CITIZENS. BY JIMMY YAP

a non-profit organisation that helps senior citizens enrich their lives through volunteerism. “Together with our Ageing-In-Place Community Care Team (AIP-CCT), the volunteers helped grow our home visit programme and have made a difference to many lives in the community. As a way to also promote active ageing, we hope more seniors would be encouraged to join us on board in the spirit of volunteerism and touch many more hearts,” says Ms Lydia Chin Lee Hoon, Senior Manager with Khoo Teck Puat Hospital’s AIP-CCT.

RSVP currently has about 1,500 volunteers, and slightly more than

half of them are aged between 60 and 70 years old. Around 35 to 40 per cent of the people on its list are active volunteers who clock at least 36 hours a year volunteering, says Mr Koh Juay Meng, President of RSVP. While RSVP has programmes to help all ages, about 80 per cent of programmes involve senior volunteers helping other seniors. Apart from MyBuddy, it also has an Enriching Lives of Seniors Programme for senior volunteers to befriend vulnerable and socially-isolated elderly, and engage them in community activities to keep them physically and mentally active. These activities take place in

Senior Activity Centres, as well as Residents' Committee centres. One of the organisation's more popular programmes for helping seniors is Cyberguide, which aims to promote IT literacy and skills among seniors. There are general courses on how to use a tablet, an iPhone or an Android phone, as well as specific courses to help seniors do online banking, book travel packages on the Internet, look for songs on YouTube, and to use Facebook to keep in touch with friends. Courses on digital photography and video are also popular. "In the past, taking photos meant using film. Now, they are snapped with handphones — and this means learning to work with digital photos," says Mr Koh. "After taking photos, we show them how to download, edit and manage them."

For Seniors, By Seniors

Getting senior citizens to train other seniors has many advantages. As Mr Koh says, "Our trainers teach at a senior's pace." This resonates well with retired bank officer Morni Sulaiman, 72, who has taken courses on using Facebook and digital photography at RSVP, and is now learning how to do on-camera interviews as well as video editing. He says he appreciates having an older trainer to guide him. "When we are trained by seniors, they understand that we are slower, that we need explanations to be repeated. They are more patient."

Another advantage is that of language. Older Chinese people tend to have a better grasp of Hokkien and Cantonese as compared to Mandarin, and it helps that befrienders such as Mr Lim are well-versed in these dialects.

Everyone's Gain

The benefits of reaching out go both ways. Research has shown

THAT'S THE REASON WHY I LIKE VOLUNTEERING — BECAUSE I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

MR LIM BOCK SENG, 63, A RETIRED CIVIL SERVANT

that volunteers live longer and report higher levels of well-being. A Canadian study tracked 1,001 Swedish citizens, all of whom retired in 2010, over a five-year period. Their development of cognitive problems was monitored, and it was found that people who did volunteer work for at least one hour a week on a regular basis were 2.44 times less likely to develop dementia than seniors who did not.

Another Canadian study conducted in 2014 examined 73 studies published over the last 45 years involving adults aged 50-plus who were in formal volunteering roles. Researchers found that seniors who volunteered saw reduction in symptoms of depression, better overall health, fewer functional limitations and greater longevity.

Dr Adeline Chuo, a Senior Consultant with the Department of Geriatric Medicine at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) says that outreach work helps senior volunteers to be "socially engaged with other people in the community, thus preventing social isolation and other related medical conditions such as low mood or even depression."

Agreeing, RSVP president Mr Koh says that the trainers at the organisation often end up becoming friends with their students. "After training, everyone goes out for dinner or outings."

Volunteers also tend to feel

useful and good about themselves when they are able to reach out and help others. "Despite being a senior, they are not seen as a burden, but appreciated as an asset," says Mr Koh.

Being able to help others is what motivates people like Mr Lim. He recalls encouraging a woman in her 80s to use her e-scooter to travel to the neighbourhood shops. It took three months of persuasion and prodding before the woman, who lives alone, finally found the courage to navigate the neighbourhood on her own. Since doing so, her life has changed. With her new-found independence, she socialises more because she is no longer trapped in her home. Says Mr Lim: "That's the reason why I like volunteering — because I can make a difference." **LW**

To learn more about RSVP and its programmes, visit www.rsvp.org.sg.



Mr Lim Bock Seng is one of 1,500 volunteers with non-profit organisation RSVP. It helps senior citizens enrich their lives through volunteerism.



NO RASH

JUDGEMENTS, PLEASE

PSORIASIS PATIENTS NEED NOT FEEL TRAPPED BY THIS INCURABLE SKIN CONDITION, AS THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS TO KEEP IT UNDER CONTROL.

BY **PHYLLIS HONG** IN CONSULTATION WITH
DR EUGENE TAN CONSULTANT DERMATOLOGIST //
NATIONAL SKIN CENTRE

OUR SKIN, especially the upper layer, has the inherent ability to repair itself when injured. However, when this regenerative capability experiences a malfunction, the result is a potentially uncomfortable and unsightly condition called psoriasis. Psoriasis is a chronic disease where skin cells multiply at an accelerated rate and mature in three to four days — instead of the usual three to four weeks. When the cells eventually die, the build-up of ‘dead skin’ manifests as raised, inflamed reddish patches with thick silvery scales.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 100 million people suffer from psoriasis worldwide. In Singapore, about one per cent of the population — or more than 50,000 people

— is known to suffer from the condition. Psoriasis affects men and women in equal numbers, irrespective of race. It can also start at any age, though most commonly manifests between the ages of 20 and 30, as well as 50 and 60.

Doctors have yet to find the exact cause of psoriasis, but genes are known to be a key factor. “Most healthy individuals have an estimated four per cent risk of developing psoriasis in their lifetime. This figure increases to 30 per cent for children with one affected parent and spikes to 65 per cent if both parents are affected,” says Dr Eugene Tan, consultant dermatologist at the National Skin Centre (NSC). Environmental factors and lifestyle habits, such as respiratory infections, skin trauma, alcohol, smoking and stress can also trigger the development of psoriasis.

There is no known method to guard against getting psoriasis. “The best way

forward is to lead a healthy lifestyle,” says Dr Tan, “This includes regular exercise, a healthy well-balanced diet, abstaining from smoking, maintaining an optimal weight for one’s height and managing stress effectively.”

Beyond Skin-Deep

Psoriasis’ severity varies across individuals and is assessed based on how serious the rash is and how much of the body’s surface area is affected. Depending on the symptoms, psoriasis can be classified into different types. The most common is chronic plaque psoriasis, where thick crusted plaques are typically found on the elbows, knees and scalp. Other rarer types, such as pustular psoriasis, may cause pus-filled blisters on different parts of the body. Psoriasis may or may not be itchy. In cases where the scalp is affected, hair loss may also occur. Even when the condition is under control, patients will always face the risk of flare-ups as psoriasis is a lifelong disease.

If left untreated, psoriasis can lead to serious medical complications. Studies have associated psoriasis with a higher risk of chronic ailments. While there are no established reasons for the link, research suggests that it could be because psoriasis is a type of autoimmune disease which causes systemic inflammation in other organs. This in turn increases the risk of ischaemic heart disease, stroke, fatty liver and inflammatory bowel disease among others. Besides affecting the skin, some patients have also been known to concurrently develop psoriatic arthritis, which manifests as stiffness, pain and swelling of affected joints. This may lead to permanent joint deformities in severe cases. In addition, half of the patients may experience pitting, thickening and irregular contours of their nails.

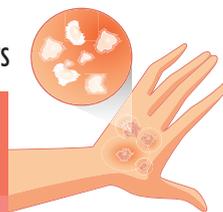
Uncomfortable In Their Own Skin

Beyond causing physical discomfort, psoriasis’ relapsing nature and highly-visible symptoms can have a knock-on effect on patients’ mental well-being. A generally poor public awareness of the disease has resulted in some misconceptions (see sidebar), and patients

PSORIASIS vs ECZEMA

LEARN TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THESE SKIN AILMENTS

Skin is covered with patches of scaly dead skin	Skin appears cracked and red
May or may not be itchy	Is always itchy
Affects only about one per cent of the population	More common. Affects 20 per cent of children in Singapore



have frequently reported being shunned in public places.

In a survey conducted by the Psoriasis Association of Singapore in 2015, involving 340 members of the public, 62 per cent of respondents said that they would disapprove of their child marrying someone with psoriasis; 52 per cent would not let their children play with psoriasis patients; 43 per cent would be unwilling to shake their hands; and 39 per cent would not consider hiring them.

Such are psoriasis’ debilitating effects that it has been linked to higher risk of developing psychiatric disorders. A recent 2016 study on 100 psoriasis patients who visited the NSC found that 17 per cent of the group had anxiety disorder, and 15 per cent had depression. Those with more severe forms of the disease reported serious depression.

Effective Control

While psoriasis remains incurable, there are effective treatments that help to suppress the disease. An example is topical medication in the forms of creams and ointments, such as topical steroids and calcipotriol derived from vitamin D. Patients with more severe psoriasis may take oral medication such as methotrexate and cyclosporin, or undergo phototherapy, in which ultraviolet light is used to slow the growth of new skin cells. Another option is the injection of biologic agents that work by blocking specific immune pathways that drive psoriasis.

Each treatment method differs in frequency, cost and potential side effects. The latter can range from temporary nausea and dizziness to more serious consequences like organ damage. **LW**

Busting The MYTHS

MYTH: A person can catch the disease by touching or sharing food with a psoriasis patient.

FACT: Psoriasis is **non-contagious**. It will not spread through skin contact, water or saliva.

MYTH: Children with psoriasis will grow out of it.

FACT: Psoriasis is a **lifelong chronic condition** with no cure. When it is controlled, patients may experience periods of normal skin, but the disease may relapse.

MYTH: Psoriasis patients cannot do outdoor sports as the sun and perspiration will aggravate their condition.

FACT: While sun-tanning or prolonged sun exposure is not recommended, most patients report **improvement with moderate sunlight exposure**. Patients are also encouraged to **exercise regularly**. If excessive perspiration causes more itch, patients can exercise in the early morning or evening when the weather is cooler.

MYTH: If there is no family history, a person is safe from developing psoriasis.

FACT: In the absence of family history, individuals still have an estimated **4 per cent risk** of developing psoriasis in their lifetime.

Paying it Forward

HELPING OTHERS IS SECOND NATURE TO STAFF NURSE

MR BENJAMIN RAMKI MATHEVAN.

INTERVIEW ASHUTOSH RAVIKRISHNAN



ROCK ON

Nurses at TTSH don't just work hard — they play hard too. Benjamin is a drummer in an all-nurse band, **Nursing Jamz**, that covers popular pop and rock tunes. "We're gearing up for a performance for Singapore Nurses' Day. Watch out for it!"

H

AVING GROWN UP in an orphanage,

I know what it's like to have experienced unconditional care and kindness. It's a special feeling knowing that someone has gone out of their way to make your life a little better. That explains why I have always been inspired to 'pay it forward' in everything that I do, even in my career. I was thinking about how I could do this best when my adoptive mother — who runs the orphanage — suggested nursing. I wasn't convinced at first because I thought nursing was a 'female' job. But after some research, my perception of the profession changed. I realised that helping people when they are sick is extremely meaningful; it is when you are ill that you are most vulnerable.

I was assigned to a general ward on my first nursing stint; this was where I encountered many long-stay patients. The men often did not shave and were unkempt. One day, I decided to take matters into my own hands and sought permission to cut their hair. I was given the green light and it became a weekly routine. The experience taught me that you don't need an abundance of money or time to do good to others — even a simple act or gesture can create a positive impact. That is all that matters.

I switched to the Emergency Department (ED) a year-and-a-half ago to further my career. I love the pace of the ED and the adrenaline rush it gives me. In a ward setting, you are more likely to deal with patients from just one specialty of medical care. But in the ED, you see it all. I work eight-hour shifts and see about

30 to 40 patients of all ages and backgrounds each time. Being multilingual — English, Mandarin, Tamil, Malay, Cantonese and Hokkien — has helped me to communicate with patients, and reassure them that they are in good hands.

Although patients are our priority, it's also important to allay the fear and anxiety of family members, many of whom genuinely appreciate the work of ED staff. Once, a lady whose relative was treated in the ED a few days earlier, sent us a 'Thank You' email and singled out a few of us by name. It was heart-warming to know that though patients and their loved ones may not be able to show their gratitude in those stressful moments (in the ED), they are thankful for the care we provide. Touching episodes like these have reaffirmed my decision to become a nurse.

During my annual leave, I usually visit the orphanage to spend time with my adoptive parents. When I'm there, I also help look after the children. I hope that in some small way, I can inspire them to succeed in life. And when they do, I hope they will find it in them to give back to others as well. **LW**

Mr Benjamin Ramki Mathevan is a Staff Nurse at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH)'s Emergency Department.

Making Change Happen

BEING EMPOWERED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO PATIENTS' LIVES KEEPS ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE MR RAVEEN DEV GOING. INTERVIEW **PHYLLIS HONG**

I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN that I wanted to work in the healthcare industry. I often accompanied my grandparents to their medical appointments. Like the healthcare professionals who helped them, I wanted to help others, too. I briefly considered becoming a pharmacist but decided I wanted to be more directly involved with patients in their care journey. Hence, my choice to study nursing at Nanyang Polytechnic on a Ministry of Health (MOH) scholarship.

I was posted to the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) as a Staff Nurse upon graduation. Working at IMH has helped me to realise that its patients are an under-served group, although now there is increasing mental health awareness in Singapore. Mental health patients can be 'mysterious' — you never know what is going on in their minds. This stirs my curiosity and makes caring for them more intriguing. To gain more knowledge, I did an Advanced Diploma in Nursing (Mental Health), then a Bachelor of Science (Nursing).

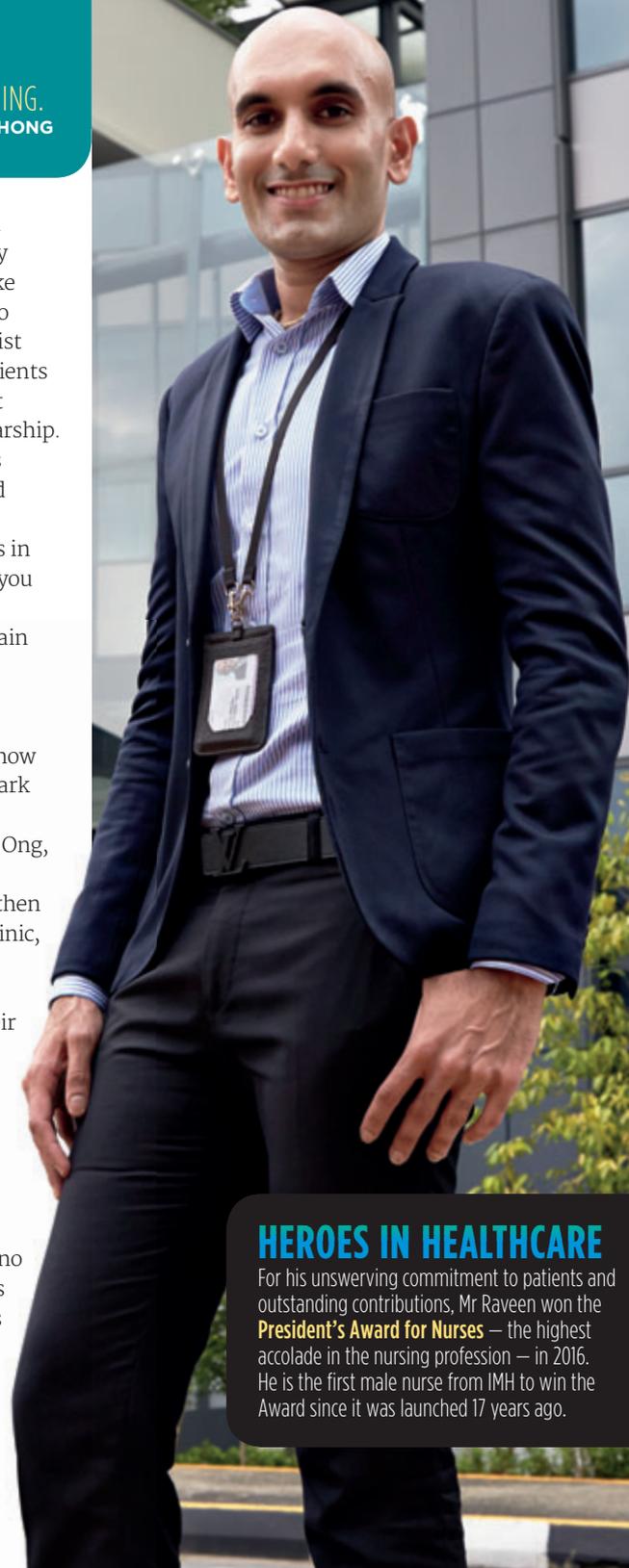
When I saw Singapore's pioneer batch of Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) at work in 2004, I was inspired by how empowering their role was in healthcare. I wanted to embark on this clinical track to help patients at a deeper level and develop professionally. With the support of Ms Samantha Ong, my then-Nurse Manager who is now Chief Nurse at IMH, I pursued my Master's of Science Degree (Nursing). It was then that I learnt the concept of the APN-Led Continuity Care Clinic, which was later implemented in IMH*.

As an APN, I work with doctors to assess patients and develop treatment plans. I also educate patients about their mental illness, offer counselling and facilitate support groups, as well as mentor junior staff at IMH. What drives me in these 16 years at IMH? It's seeing patients recover and being able to effect changes in the healthcare system. Working with patients on their road to recovery is my passion and something I look forward to every day.

On weekends, I often frequent cafés and my quest for a good cuppa continues even on holidays abroad. There is no dearth of surprises when you expose yourself to new places and cultures. Similarly for work, when there are good ideas with potential to challenge the status quo, my response is always 'Why not?' **LW**

Mr Raveen Dev is an Advanced Practice Nurse and Covering Assistant Director, Nursing, at IMH.

** Under this initiative, patients who have seen the consultant will follow up with a fixed APN instead of rotating Medical Officers, cultivating rapport and trust, and for better continuity of care.*



HEROES IN HEALTHCARE

For his unwavering commitment to patients and outstanding contributions, Mr Raveen won the **President's Award for Nurses** — the highest accolade in the nursing profession — in 2016. He is the first male nurse from IMH to win the Award since it was launched 17 years ago.

Its eye-catching appearance aside, Rainbow Chard (right) packs health benefits a-plenty, as does Yellow Dragonfruit (below).



Eating into the HYPE

CERTAIN EXOTIC VARIETIES OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES HAVE FOUND FAVOUR AMONG HEALTH-CONSCIOUS SINGAPOREANS. BUT ARE THEY MERELY PRETTY ALTERNATIVES TO THE USUAL FARE?

BY **AUDRINA GAN** IN CONSULTATION WITH **MS CHAN SAU LING** DIETITIAN AND **MS PAULINE XIE** SENIOR DIETITIAN // NATIONAL HEALTHCARE GROUP POLYCLINICS

With cancer, diabetes and heart disease rates on the rise in Singapore, some consumers have turned to eating certain exotic fruits and vegetables because of their purported health benefits. Marketed as ‘superfoods’, these often command premium prices, having been touted in the media as being higher in nutritional value (as compared to standard fare). However, this has not always been found to be true.

While the jury is out on the nutritional advantages of such foods, their appeal also lies in their rarity and unique taste, as well as their unusual colours.

We are familiar with white and red dragonfruit — but yellow? Citing this example, Ms Reyna Wang of online fruit grocer Momobud said, “Yellow dragonfruit was brought into Singapore a few years ago due to its appearance, sweetness and health benefits. Sales have been consistent, and we have a base of regular customers.”

Such foods are now more readily available in supermarkets such as NTUC FairPrice, which started stocking up on exotic fruits two years ago. It introduced an exotic vegetable selection in its Finest outlets in December 2016. The higher prices of these items are often justified

by retailers who cite the extra effort taken to grow them, as well as the limited quantities in which they are imported into Singapore.

However, Ms Chan Sau Ling, Dietitian at National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP), says that while such exotic foods are associated with health benefits, the same benefits can also be obtained from a diverse variety of other foods. “It’s more important to eat a variety of healthy foods as part of a balanced diet, that includes two servings of fruits and two servings of vegetables daily,” she adds.

Here’s what you ought to know about some popular picks:

RAINBOW CHARD

Origin: The Mediterranean region. Distinguished by its brightly-coloured stalks, the rainbow chard is a relative of the beet, with big, tender leaves and crunchy stalks.

Nutritional value: Chard is an excellent source of fibre. It is also packed with polyphenols and contains antioxidants that help lower the risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, osteoporosis and Alzheimer's disease.

How to eat it: Sauté or add chopped raw chard to salads.



YELLOW DRAGONFRUIT

Origin: Ecuador.

Has a juicier texture and is sweeter than the red and white varieties.

Nutritional value: Contains a higher amount of antioxidants and beta carotene than the red and white varieties. Antioxidants can help to alleviate respiratory tract ailments and constipation. Beta carotene, which is converted into Vitamin A when consumed, is essential for healthy skin and good vision. Regular consumption of the fruit can help to reduce high blood pressure and heart disease risk.

How to eat it: Peel off the skin and eat it whole, or cut it into cubes.



MOON DROP GRAPES

Origin: California, USA.

Cultivated without genetic modification, these uniquely-shaped seedless grapes are extra crunchy and intensely sweet.

Nutritional value: Like other black grapes, the Moon Drop is rich in antioxidants, flavonoids and vitamins A, C and K. Besides improving vision, it helps to control blood sugar, improve cardiac health and relieve constipation.

How to eat it: Usually eaten whole. Alternatively split into half and stuff with cheese, or roast with salt and lemon and pair with sautéed bitter greens.



SEEDLESS PAPAYA **Origin:** Israel.

The fruit is characterised by its delicate fragrance and full-flavoured pulp. The pulp maintains its firm consistency for a long time even after sliced. Its greenish flesh is easy and fast to cook, and the shelf life is longer compared to the regular variety.

Nutritional value: As with seeded papayas, the seedless variety is high in Vitamin A, Vitamin C, calcium, iron, magnesium, potassium and copper. Eating it improves digestion and prevents constipation. Seedless papayas contain phytochemicals, which have been found to prevent heart disease and some cancers.

How to eat it: Eat it as you would a seeded papaya. If consumed at its unripe stage (when the skin is still green), add as ingredient to a soup, or a casserole, with meat and rice.



CHERRY BELLE RADISH

Origin: Holland.

This small, round root vegetable is crisp, firm and slightly piquant.

Nutritional value: Radishes are a good source of vitamin C and help to rebuild tissues and blood vessels. Radish may also regulate blood pressure, and prevent respiratory problems. It also contains antibacterial compounds such as phosphorus, zinc and vitamin-B complex that soothes rashes and other skin disorders.

How to eat it: Slice and eat with buttered toast, or add to salads, soups, stews and curries.

CONSUMING BY COLOUR

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES GET THEIR COLOUR FROM BENEFICIAL MICRONUTRIENTS SUCH AS VITAMINS, MINERALS AND PHYTOCHEMICALS. CONSIDER THIS THE NEXT TIME YOU DIG IN, ADVISES NHGP DIETITIAN MS CHAN SAU LING.

RED Tomatoes are rich in lycopene, an antioxidant that helps reduce cancer risk and is good for heart health.

GREEN Leafy vegetables as well as asparagus and broccoli are excellent sources of folate and other minerals that can help to reduce oxidative damage to cells.

YELLOW/ORANGE The beta-carotene in sweet potatoes, pumpkins and carrots is converted to Vitamin A in the liver, which helps to maintain healthy eyes and mucous membranes.

BLUE/PURPLE Eggplants and blueberries have antioxidant properties that can help to reduce the risk of cancer, stroke and heart disease.

WHITE Bananas and potatoes are good sources of potassium and carbohydrates.

NOT SO HOT after all

HOT-DESKING HAS BEEN TOUTED AS THE OFFICE SYSTEM OF THE FUTURE — BUT HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOUR HEALTH?

BY ASHUTOSH RAVIKRISHNAN



IT IS A MONDAY morning and Ms Maya Vinodini has just arrived at her office in the Central Business District. Instead of going to her desk, the real estate executive heads to her designated locker to retrieve her laptop and documents. The 25 year-old then chooses a work station to work from for the day. “My seat changes every day,” she tells *Lifewise*. “Sometimes it’s by the window, but if that’s taken, I’ll sit in the pantry. I like this arrangement because it makes group work a lot easier. But there are definitely days I miss having a space to call my own because I’m quite a creature of habit.”

Such scenarios have become increasingly common in Singapore — and across the Asia-Pacific region as a whole — as more companies embrace flexible workspaces. This year, a survey by real estate services firm CBRE Asia-Pacific found that more than half of the 450 respondents plan to implement such workspaces in the future. These spaces support hot-desking, a practice in which employees do not have a specific workstation to call their own. They change seats every day, subject to what is available. This arrangement cuts operational costs by up to 30 per cent, according to a 2015 report by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). It is not just cost savings that attract employers to flexible workspaces: the arrangement is also believed to support communication and boost collaboration among employees, and enhance productivity.

However, this “nomadic” way of working may not be all that beneficial to your health, both mental and physical. Follow these tips to stay healthy — and happy — as you hot-desk.

SIT UP!

An ideal chair or monitor height that a co-worker has adjusted for himself/herself may not be as suitable for you. In a hot-desking environment, the ergonomic settings of each work station changes with individual users. This increases the likelihood of a strained neck and back pain.

WORK AROUND IT ▶▶ When setting your work station up for the day, adjust your monitor and chair so that you:

- Head is straight and not tilted up or down
- Knees are slightly lower than your hips
- Feet are flat on the floor

Stretch regularly to relax tight muscles, relieve eye strain and boost energy. Do a simple routine twice a day in the office, targeting your neck, shoulders, back and glutes.

GERM-SHARING One feature of flexible workspaces is common work stations which are fitted with larger keyboards and monitors than those on laptops. According to the 2015 *BBC* report, these stations are home to at least 10 million bacteria and viruses, many which are disease-carrying. As a result, co-workers can catch contagious illnesses like the common cold and gastroenteritis from each other rather easily.

WORK AROUND IT ▶▶ Clean all surfaces that you will come in contact with, with anti-bacterial wipes before you start work. Practising good hygiene by washing your hands regularly also helps.

NUISANCE NOISE

Traditional office spaces feature cubicles where workers can work in peace and quiet. But with open arrangements, it is more likely that you will be within hearing of boisterous office banter. The American National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health found that ambient noise raises stress levels and aggravates stress-related conditions such as high blood pressure, coronary disease and migraines.

WORK AROUND IT ▶▶ Invest in noise-cancelling headphones and tune out. Researchers at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York suggest using recordings of nature sounds to focus better.

PERSONALITY MATTERS

Family photos, potted plants and coffee mugs are familiar sights at traditional work spaces. Unfortunately, these are not encouraged when it comes to hot-desking. The absence of personal touches may have a negative effect on workers' morale, say researchers from the University of Exeter in the UK. "Having some control (over their surroundings) makes people happier at work," says Dr Craig Knight, who led the study. An employee told *The Straits Times* in a hot-desking feature, "I like personalising my desk space with photos of family and friends. It helps me work better."

WORK AROUND IT ▶▶ You can still be reminded of family and friends by customising the wallpaper and screensaver of your digital devices. Another way, as one hot-desking employee shared with *Lifewise*, is to "keep a box of personal mementos in the locker and display them at the workspace. At the end of the day, pack them back into the locker."



OFFICE LONELINESS

Hot-desking can mean that employees are surrounded by colleagues they are unfamiliar with, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Researchers from Brigham Young University in the US have found that these factors are just as injurious to health as obesity and smoking.

WORK AROUND IT ▶▶ Why not take a break and get to know your co-workers? A simple "hi" can break the ice. Social interaction has been shown to improve productivity and boost your mood.

A HISTORY OF HOT-DESKING



SOURCES: THE GUARDIAN, CALIBERLINK, SINGAPORE BUSINESS REVIEW

- The practice was first inspired by the naval system of "hot-bunking", in which seamen share bunks between shifts.
- It took off in the 1980s in the United States and Europe in response to high office rental costs.
- The practice has since spread across the world. Major companies in Singapore that have embraced hot-desking include AXA, Credit Suisse and Mediacorp (pictured, left).
- It has been met with mostly positive response: an AXA survey of its employees found that 80 per cent were satisfied with the new arrangement.

DURING THE DAY, Jaclyn Ong is a mild-mannered staff nurse at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) who conducts clinical research and supports clinicians in their work. But when the sun descends, the 39 year-old morphs into an ardent fitness-enthusiast who cannot get enough of Zumba, Piloxing and POUND. So passionate is she about these workouts that she teaches seven training sessions a week, and is still able to fit in other fitness classes and spend time with her husband and two kids.

Jaclyn takes some time out of her busy schedule to explain what Zumba, Piloxing and POUND are all about, and how they benefit our health. “I was very active in my younger days: an avid jogger, a volleyball player, and gym goer. But everything came to a grinding halt after I had kids. I didn’t work out for about 10 years,” she says. In 2014, there were warning signs that her health was declining. “I was worried when my cholesterol level started climbing, as I have a family history of heart attack and high blood pressure. I’d also get breathless just walking up the stairs to get to the carpark.”

She began taking kickboxing, Pilates, and Zumba classes at a women-only gym to improve and regain her fitness. However, it was at the workplace that she stumbled



Get ripped to the **RHYTHM**

**GET IN ON THE LATEST MUSIC-DRIVEN STUDIO
WORKOUTS WITH IMH SENIOR RESEARCH COORDINATOR
AND FITNESS INSTRUCTOR JACLYN ONG.**

BY JIMMY YAP

PHOTOS: EALBERT HO, SHUTTERSTOCK

upon Piloxing. The human resource department at IMH had engaged a Piloxing instructor to conduct classes and Jaclyn fell in love with the workout, which combined her love for boxing, Pilates and dance. With encouragement from her instructor, Jaclyn became an instructor herself about two years ago. Her love for dance led her to get additional certification in Zumba and she picked up POUND because of her love for music (she plays the *guzheng* and *pipa*, which are traditional Chinese stringed instruments).

Jaclyn currently holds a regular class at Ang Mo Kio Hub, and also teaches at SportsHub, the Warehouse Arena, Chinese Swimming Club and Sengkang Neighbourhood Park. About 90 per cent of her students are women, most of whom are aged between 30 to 45. Some are as young as 14, while her oldest student is 75. She tells *Lifewise* more about her workouts of choice:

SHAKING IT UP

Zumba is a total workout that mixes low- and high-intensity moves for a calorie-burning dance. It incorporates Latin and World rhythms and moves such as merengue, salsa, cumbia, mambo and soca, as well as hip-hop.

WHAT DOES IT DO FOR YOU?

Besides combining all elements of fitness — cardio, muscle conditioning, balance and flexibility — that burns calories, it increases the heart rate and tones muscles. You'll burn 400 to 600 calories per session.

WHO IS IT SUITABLE FOR?

Zumba is suitable for people of all fitness levels. All you have to do is move to the beat. Classes are held at community centres and boutique dance studios around Singapore. Beginners should start off by attending lessons once a week — to see if they have the stamina or if their

body can manage, as Zumba involves high-impact moves such as jumping and bouncing. Depending on your level of ability, gradually increase the lesson frequency. "I know of people who do four classes a day, which each session lasting an hour," says Jaclyn. For comfort and to prevent injuries, Jaclyn advises wearing training shoes or dance sneakers as the soles have less friction than running shoes.

Jaclyn lost weight when she first started exercising, but her weight has gone up again due to **muscle gain**. Her body fat percentage has dropped from **29 per cent** to **19 per cent**.

BE A 'BEAT BOXER'

Piloxing is a non-stop, cardio fusion of standing Pilates, boxing and dance accompanied by uptempo music. Boxing moves include uppercuts and forward jabs; standing Pilates postures such as the standing side crunch; and fast dance moves.

WHAT DOES IT DO FOR YOU?

Piloxing is a high-energy interval workout that allows maximum calorie burn and increases stamina. You can burn up to 800 calories in one session. Besides building up strength, it also works the core. Don't worry too much about the boxing bit as no sparring is involved.

WHO IS IT SUITABLE FOR?

This workout can be modified to meet the abilities of different individuals. Piloxing involves various body-movement techniques, so instructors often hold small classes to give more attention to each student and prevent injuries from occurring. Start off with one class a week and increase the frequency when you feel that your body is ready for more. No special equipment is required but you can opt to wear weighted Piloxing gloves. "The added weight will allow the muscle to work harder. This helps to tone the arm muscles and increase the heart rate during a workout," says Jaclyn. You can go barefoot or wear training shoes if the workout is conducted outdoors.

AIR DRUMMING

POUND is a new workout that comprises using lightly-weighted Ripstix® that transforms drumming into an effective physical exercise. It combines cardio, conditioning, and strength training with yoga and Pilates-inspired movements.

WHAT DOES IT DO FOR YOU?

POUND burns up to 900 calories per session and helps to strengthen and sculpt infrequently used muscles such as your core as well as your inner and outer thighs, and glutes. It also helps build endurance.

WHO IS IT SUITABLE FOR?

As POUND is a high-intensity interval cardio workout, a relatively high level of fitness is needed. However, what sets it apart from the other workouts is that it is wheelchair-friendly and can also be modified to be kid-friendly. It allows you to work out your upper body even if you can't move your lower body. "Seniors or people who use a wheelchair could do an arm-only workout instead of the standard choreography," says Jaclyn. **LW**



Lightening the LOAD

ACCORDING TO A TEAM OF NURSE RESEARCHERS, HOW CAREGIVERS SEE THEMSELVES MAY MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE TO THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING WHEN CARRYING OUT THEIR ROLE.

BY **WANDA TAN** IN CONSULTATION WITH
ADJ ASST PROF CHAN EE YUEE
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF NURSING // TAN TOCK SENG HOSPITAL



A S A FORMER CAREGIVER TO her late father, Dr Chan Ee Yuee, Assistant Director of Nursing at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), knows firsthand how stressful and overwhelming it can be to care for an ageing parent. This provided the impetus for her nursing team's ongoing multidisciplinary research, Project MACE (Mastery-centric Assessment of Caregivers of Hospitalised Frail Elderly). "Let's imagine that caregiver burden is a wall," says Dr Chan, figuratively. "Can personal mastery — a psychological

resource defined as the extent to which a person perceives that he or she is in control of one's own life situation — act like a ladder that lets caregivers climb that wall?"

Dr Chan elaborates that the concept of personal mastery has so far been predominantly applied to caregivers of people with dementia. "However, our study looks at those who are caring for the frail elderly, among whom dementia patients are just one subgroup of this population at risk," she says.

Started in late 2015, the three-year project is split into

two phases. The first focuses on defining the impacts and determinants of mastery in caregivers of hospitalised older adults. The findings will then be used to develop a screening tool for identifying at-risk caregivers with low mastery, so that appropriate interventions can be targeted at them.

Mastering Caregiving

A total of 274 participants — comprising primary family caregivers for people aged 65 years and above — were recruited for Dr Chan's study,



WHILE EQUIPPING CAREGIVERS WITH SKILL MASTERY THROUGH CAREGIVER TRAINING, WE MUST ALSO NOT NEGLECT THEIR PERSONAL MASTERY. IT IS EQUALLY, IF NOT, MORE IMPORTANT.

DR CHAN EE YUEE, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF NURSING, TAN TOCK SENG HOSPITAL

identified with the help of fellow nurses and doctors working in the hospital wards. They were each surveyed at four different time points over a six-month period: twice when the older adult was hospitalised at TTSH and twice after being discharged. Fifteen of the quantitative-survey participants were also selected for in-depth qualitative interviews to triangulate the data.

To minimise the occurrence of incomplete data at follow-up, those caring for an older adult whose deteriorating condition meant that he or she would likely be placed in a nursing home within the six-month period — or who would foreseeably pass away in that time due to terminal illness — were excluded from the study.

In their analysis, Dr Chan and her team found that caregiver mastery was associated with lower perceived burden (personal strain and role strain), as well as lower susceptibility to anxiety and depression. Moreover, a distinction was noted between personal mastery — the extent to which a caregiver believes their situation to be within his or her locus of control — and skill mastery, also referred to as competency level. “Our study showed that both dimensions of caregiver mastery can independently influence caregivers’ perceived burden, anxiety and depression,” says Dr Chan. Considering that the

caregivers are partners in patient care, healthcare providers need to look beyond the current emphasis on the latter dimension. “While equipping caregivers with skill mastery through caregiver training, we must also not neglect their personal mastery. It is equally, if not, more important for the caregivers’ psychological well-being.”

Having established that caregivers’ sense of mastery protects against the strains typically associated with this role, the team is now analysing the data to find out the determinants of high mastery. Already, some common themes have emerged. “People we term as ‘successful’ caregivers — those with high mastery — tend to have a positive frame of mind. They accept their role as caregivers willingly and derive meaning from giving back to their elderly loved ones,” says Dr Chan. Conversely, caregivers with low mastery tend to be more negative, carry out caregiving tasks reluctantly and view their role as a heavy burden.

Another attribute observed among successful caregivers is that they are adept at balancing the demands of caregiving with ‘me time’. Given that caregiving is a long journey, they recognise the need to take breaks to recharge when their reserve is low, and are comfortable seeking help from other family members or friends.

Seeing “Invisible Patients”

Dr Chan’s work first presented their preliminary findings at the Singapore Health and Biomedical Congress (SHBC) 2016 Scientific Competition, winning Silver prize for the ‘Singapore Nursing Award’ and Gold prize for the ‘Best Poster Award — Nursing’. Come July 2017, she will present her research at the World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics in San Francisco, USA. “I’m excited to share our findings on a global platform,” notes Dr Chan. She has also submitted a research paper detailing the positive impacts of caregiver mastery to a peer-reviewed journal for publication.

Ultimately, the Phase 2 development of a screening tool will enable nurses in the hospital setting to identify at-risk caregivers with low mastery and direct them towards mastery-enhancing interventions. “This will allow caregivers — deemed ‘invisible patients’ — to cope well and care for their elderly loved ones in the community for as long as possible, without succumbing to the heavy toil from caregiving, says Dr Chan. **LW**

For Project MACE, Dr Chan was one of three awardees of the National Healthcare Group’s Research Support Scheme (NHG RSS).

For issues of Catalyst, visit www.research.nhg.com.sg.

Q&A

ASK
THE
EXPERTS

* YOUR MEDICAL QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q1

Driving Me Crazy

I'm been driving for over 15 years, since I was 21, but each time I am a passenger in someone else's car, I get motion sickness. What causes this nauseous feeling? Why do I only get it when I don't drive? What can I do to prevent this?

Motion sickness symptoms such as nausea and vomiting may occur when there is conflict between your eyes and inner ears. A mismatch of information between the eyes and vestibular system will cause confusion in the brain and result in motion sickness. The vestibular system is a network of nerves, channels and fluids in your inner ear, which helps control balance.

As a driver, your brain anticipates and reconciles what you see and feel through your movement of the steering wheel. Although it is generally agreed that having control over a moving vehicle greatly reduces the likelihood of motion sickness, few studies have addressed this issue

directly, and the theoretical explanation for this phenomenon is not completely clear.

Mild symptoms of motion sickness can usually be improved by the following techniques:

- ▶ **Keep still:** If possible, choose a seat in the middle of the moving vehicle, because this is where you will experience the least movement. Use a pillow or headrest to help keep your head as still as possible.
- ▶ **Look at a stable object:** For example, the horizon. Reading or playing games may worsen your symptoms.
- ▶ **Close your eyes:** Getting some shut-eye may help to relieve the symptoms.
- ▶ **Unwind the windows:** Get a good supply of fresh air if you feel stuffy.
- ▶ **Relax:** Listen to music while you focus on your breathing, or carry out a mental activity such as counting backwards from 100.
- ▶ **Stay calm:** You are more likely to get motion sickness if you worry during your journey.

You should also avoid eating a large meal or drinking alcohol before travelling. Keep hydrated throughout the journey by drinking water. If you are prescribed with motion sickness medication, take them before you start the journey.

DR LEE MUN TUCK
FAMILY PHYSICIAN //
ASSOCIATE CONSULTANT //
ANG MO KIO POLYCLINIC //
NATIONAL HEALTHCARE
GROUP POLYCLINICS





Q2

Cracking The Egg Code

I have come across medical research regarding eggs online stating that a “high-cholesterol diet should not be associated with cardiovascular disease” and that “dietary cholesterol only has a minor effect on serum cholesterol”. Does this mean that I can eat what I want without having to worry about heart attack?

Dietary cholesterol is a type of cholesterol that comes from food while serum cholesterol is found in the bloodstream. Indeed, dietary cholesterol has a minor effect on serum cholesterol. As part of healthy eating guidelines, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) advises individuals to consume less than 300mg of cholesterol per day and less than four egg yolks per week.

It is the saturated fats and trans fats that will raise the ‘bad’ cholesterol in our body, thus increasing the risk of getting heart disease and stroke. You should limit the intake of food high in saturated fats such as fatty meats, poultry skins, butter, full-cream dairy products, as well as food with coconut, palm oil and cream; and food high in trans fats such as deep-fried food, fast food, cakes and pastries.

You can reduce the risk of chronic conditions such as heart diseases by eating healthily and keeping active.

MS LIOW HUI SHI
DIETITIAN // NATIONAL HEALTHCARE
GROUP POLYCLINICS

Q3

Something To Sweat About

I have always suffered from sweaty palms and feet. Recently on my first winter holiday, my hands were sweaty despite the cold. Is there a cure for this condition, or if there isn’t, is there any medication that can provide temporary relief? I am a 27 year-old man.

What you are experiencing is a condition known as palmoplantar hyperhidrosis. It causes a person to produce excessive sweat at the palms and soles. Although this condition can cause some inconvenience to the patient, it is usually not related to any serious health problems.



There are different treatments available to control your symptoms, including:

- **Topical antiperspirants** such as aluminium hexachloride lotion.
- **Lontophoresis** (the use of water with electrical current to treat the affected skin). One of the postulates is that this treatment microscopically thickens the outer layer of the skin, blocking the flow of sweat to the skin’s surface.
- **Botox injection** to block the secretion of the chemical that is responsible for ‘turning on’ the body’s sweat glands.
- **Surgery** for cases that do not respond well to medical treatment.

You may wish to discuss your condition with your doctor or dermatologist so that they can recommend a suitable treatment that works best for you.

DR KONG JING WEN
FAMILY PHYSICIAN // ASSOCIATE CONSULTANT // DEPUTY HEAD //
HOUGANG POLYCLINIC // NATIONAL HEALTHCARE GROUP POLYCLINICS

Breaking Down Anxiety

These days, even the most ordinary situation, like an overflowing inbox, makes me anxious. My breathing gets short, my palms get sweaty and I just want to escape from the office. How can I control this? Is there a cure for my anxiety? I am in my mid-40s.

Having some anxiety symptoms occasionally is a natural response to the stressors we commonly face in life, and actually serves to warn and protect us from danger. It is only when the symptoms of anxiety are severe, long-standing and interfere with our daily functioning that it becomes a 'disorder'. This then would require treatment.

The most common example of such a disorder is Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD), in which one becomes easily worried about many things throughout the day for a period of more than six months. As a result, the person cannot function in his or her work/studies.

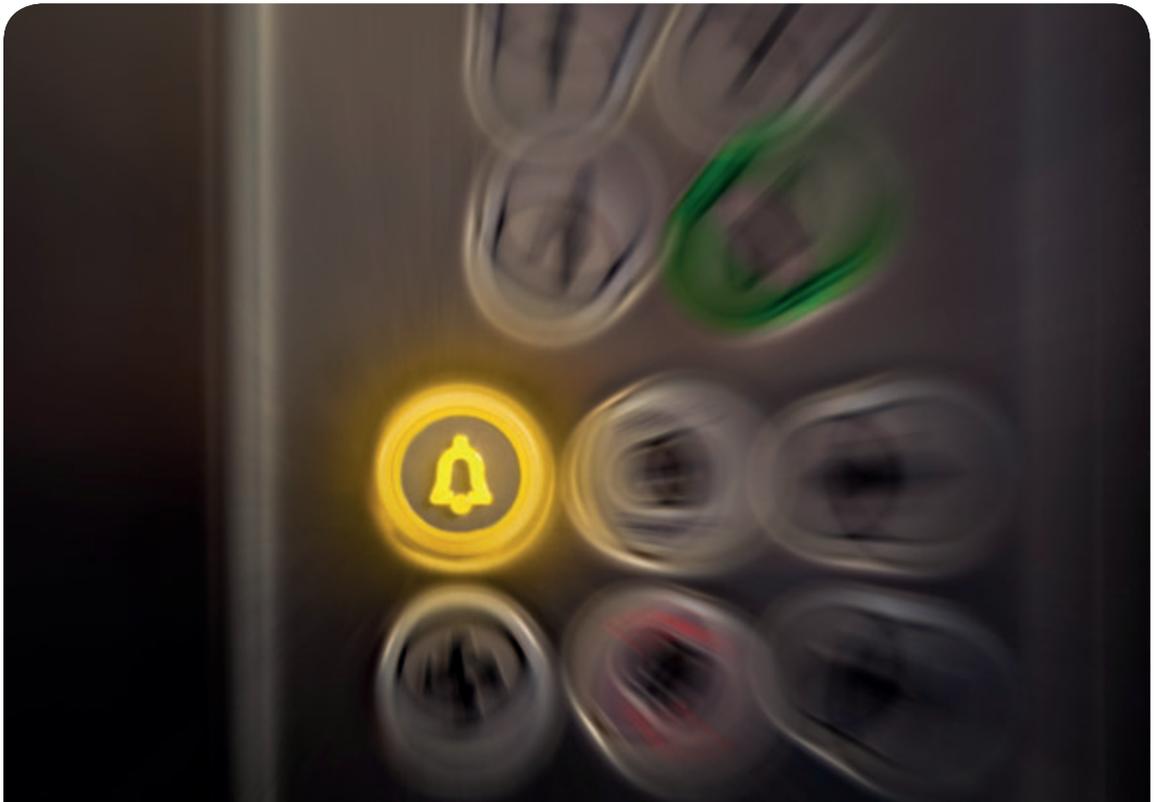
Another example is Panic Disorder, in which there are frequent recurring "panic attacks" (short episodes of severe anxiety symptoms, including palpitations and shortness of breath), as well as anticipatory fears of subsequent 'attacks'. While these symptoms are not life-threatening, they may affect the person's daily activities or cause him to turn reclusive.

In your case, try making some changes to your lifestyle. Ensure that you have sufficient sleep and adequate exercise. Certain foods and beverages such as caffeinated beverages can cause anxiety-like symptoms such as tremors and palpitations, so avoid or consume these in moderation.

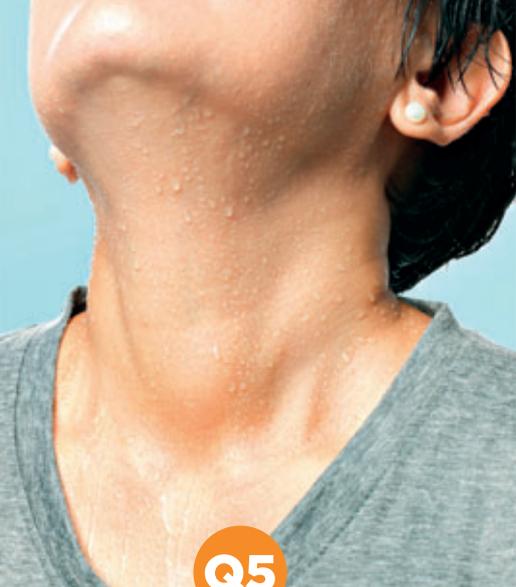
If you are still worried, visit a doctor for an assessment. A person diagnosed with anxiety disorder can be helped with both medication and psychological therapies.

DR MOK YEE MING

SENIOR CONSULTANT AND CHIEF // DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL PSYCHIATRY // HEAD, MOOD DISORDERS UNIT // INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH



PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO, SHUTTERSTOCK



Q5

Sweaty Issue

Recently, I have been sweating a lot. I thought it must be due to the hot weather, but after showering or when I'm in an air-conditioned place, I still perspire. My husband also pointed out that I have developed body odour. What could be wrong with me? I'm in my early 40s and slightly overweight.

What you have described could be due to a condition known as secondary generalised hyperhidrosis, which causes a person to produce excessive sweat over most areas of the body. It may be related to medical conditions such as menstrual disturbances, hormonal disorders, infections or the use of certain medications.

The treatment for this involves finding out the underlying medical condition that is causing the excessive sweating. It is important to see your doctor to find out the root cause before he or she can recommend the most appropriate treatment.

DR KONG JING WEN

FAMILY PHYSICIAN // ASSOCIATE CONSULTANT // DEPUTY HEAD // HOUGANG POLYCLINIC // NATIONAL HEALTHCARE GROUP POLYCLINICS

Q6

Eating Bad

I've always eaten my dinners late, at about 9pm, but nowadays, I wake up with a bloated stomach and indigestion. The General Practitioner (GP) I saw attributed this to gastric, and advised me to eat at a more normal mealtime. I tried, and indeed my condition improved slightly. However, due to the nature of my work, I can't always have dinner at an earlier time. What can I do?

What you have described seems to indicate that you are suffering from dyspepsia. The symptoms of dyspepsia include abdominal bloating, belching, heartburn, nausea and vomiting.

Eating habits play an important role in improving dyspepsia. Try dividing your meals into smaller portions and eat them at a fixed time and interval every day. You should take your meal at least two hours before bedtime and avoid eating too much oily and spicy food.

Consider refraining from consuming alcohol and caffeine, as they are common substances that can cause dyspepsia. For individuals who suffer from lactose intolerance, consumption of dairy products may also worsen the condition.

Do talk to your doctor if you are taking any medication for chronic conditions. Medication such as painkillers, antidepressants and diabetic medication could cause dyspepsia too. You can consider antacids, which are available over the counter, to help with the symptoms of dyspepsia.

Be sure to pay attention to the red flags of dyspepsia such as change of stool colour, weight loss or prolonged and worsening of symptoms. Further investigations via endoscopy and ultrasound may be needed to rule out peptic ulcer disease, malignancy and gall bladder disease.

DR CHU CHUN HONG

FAMILY PHYSICIAN // TOA PAYOH POLYCLINIC // NATIONAL HEALTHCARE GROUP POLYCLINICS



I Knee Help

At 50, I have started to get the occasional pain in my knee. An X-ray subsequently showed that I have severe osteoarthritis. I've searched "knee osteoarthritis" online and there is an overload of information about things to buy and try. How do I know what works and what doesn't?



There are many treatment options available for osteoarthritis, including oral supplements containing glucosamine as a core ingredient. It is debatable whether supplements can actually reduce pain and disease progression. However, many people are keen to try these as side effects are minimal. Intra-articular injections containing either steroids or hyaluronic acid are helpful in the short term. But rather than medication, why not try some exercise?

Low-impact exercises — with the guidance of a physical therapist to help with muscle strengthening and weight loss — are useful. If you suffer from severe and debilitating osteoarthritis, surgical options such as a partial or total knee replacement can work wonders to improve your quality of life.

DR KAU CHUNG YUAN ORTHOPAEDIC CONSULTANT // **TAN TOCK SENG HOSPITAL**

PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK



Keep On Running

I'm a 40 year-old woman, who is 1.53m tall and weighs 70kg. My doctor warned that I was bordering on obesity so I decided to take up jogging. But after 45 minutes running round a park, I was very dizzy and vomited my breakfast. I would still like to jog to lose some weight, but what precautions should I take?

It is encouraging that you are keen to take up jogging in order to lose weight. You should aim for a gradual weight loss of five to 10 per cent over six to 12 months.

Jogging and other exercises will increase energy expenditure and reduce body fat. For a start, you can jog and exercise for 30 minutes per session, aiming to achieve 150 minutes of exercise a week. To ensure significant weight loss, more than 250 minutes of exercise per week is required.

Avoid heavy meals and drinks at least an hour before you start jogging and ensure that you are adequately hydrated before the exercise. Over time, you can gradually increase your running pace and distance. Proper footwear is also recommended to minimise stress to the joints and ligaments.

Apart from jogging, you should cut down on fat and sugar, which are high in calories and thus cause weight gain. You should follow a healthy balanced diet and eat regular meals to prevent you from overeating at the next meal. To help you monitor your weight, keep a food diary to record your daily food intake. If you find that you are eating too much, reduce the amount of food and exercise more.

DR DARREN SEAH
FAMILY PHYSICIAN // CONSULTANT // DIRECTOR FAMILY MEDICINE DEVELOPMENT // NATIONAL HEALTHCARE GROUP POLYCLINICS



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HURTING DOWN UNDER

Lately, my testicles hurt when I'm having sex with my partner — so much so that sometimes I have to stop halfway. This kind of spoils the mood for us. But what I am more concerned about is that it could be a sign of testicular cancer.

Testicular cancer typically presents as a painless swelling of the testis. The symptoms experienced can be due to spasm from the cremasteric reflex from the muscles in the scrotum surrounding the testis.

Cremasteric reflex is the contraction of the cremasteric muscles which cradles the testes in the scrotum. This can occur when the inner thigh is stroked or due to changes in environmental temperature. The reflex is nature's way of protecting the testes by lifting them away from harm's way, so to speak, when the inner thighs are stroked.

Another possibility is the inflammation in the epididymis, or some obstruction in the vas deferens causing pain. The epididymis is the organ that the testis is attached to. Sperm is formed in the testis and the mature sperm are stored in the epididymis before they are released into the vas deferens, a tube that connects the epididymis to the prostate. Inflammation of the epididymis is commonly due to a urinary tract infection, prostate infection or sexually-transmitted infection.

If the pain persists, consult an urologist.

DR RONNY TAN
CONSULTANT // DEPARTMENT OF UROLOGY //
TAN TOCK SENG HOSPITAL

Mane Worry

Lately, my hair has been falling out more. Is this anything to do with the type of shampoo I use, or how frequently I wash my hair? I shampoo my hair every day. What can I do to prevent further hair loss? I'm a 33 year-old man with no family history of balding.

Shampooing daily does not result in hair loss and if the type of shampoo used does not cause scalp irritation, it should not result in excessive hair loss as well.

If clumps of hair come off when you shower or you notice thinning in just a few weeks or months, you're likely dealing with a common condition called telogen effluvium. Telogen effluvium may occur after a stressful event, such as a recent illness, post-surgery or rapid weight loss. The hair loss tends to start about three months after the event and can last for six months. But typically the hair will then grow back.

Other reasons for hair loss include stress, genetic factors and poor diet (low levels of iron and certain vitamins have been linked to hair loss). It could also be due to scalp infection or autoimmune conditions such as *alopecia areata* (spot baldness).

I recommend that you consult a dermatologist for an appropriate assessment of your hair. With the right diagnosis, you will be able to manage your hair condition.

DR CHUAH SAI YEE
CONSULTANT // NATIONAL SKIN CENTRE



PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES, SHUTTERSTOCK

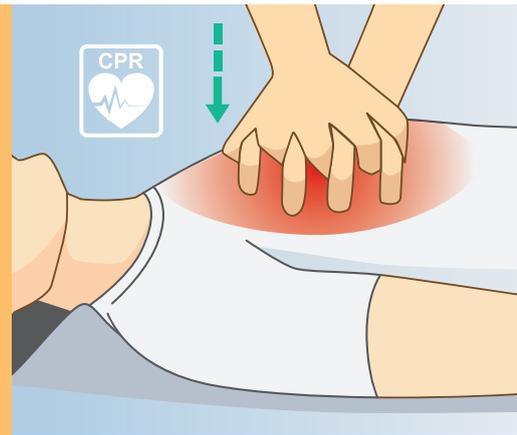
ALL ABOUT

WHAT IS CPR?

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is an emergency procedure to restore the breathing and blood circulation of an unconscious victim of sudden cardiac or respiratory arrest. By using a combination of mouth-to-mouth breathing and chest compressions, CPR aims to deliver oxygen to the victim's brain and heart.

WHEN IS IT ADMINISTERED?

CPR is performed when someone is unconscious — with no breathing and no pulse — in situations such as a heart attack, drowning, strangulation, suffocation, electrocution, as well as during a severe allergic reaction.



CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION (CPR)

KNOWING HOW TO APPLY CPR CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN A LIFE-AND-DEATH EMERGENCY.

IN CONSULTATION WITH **DR SIMON LEE** FAMILY PHYSICIAN // CONSULTANT // NATIONAL HEALTHCARE GROUP POLYCLINICS

WHY SHOULD I LEARN CPR SKILLS?

Time is of the essence for victims who require CPR — irreversible brain damage occurs within several minutes of oxygen deprivation, and the chance of survival drops by 7 to 10 per cent for every minute that passes without CPR and defibrillation. According to the Singapore Heart Foundation (SHF), about 80 per cent of cardiac arrest cases occur outside of hospitals. Therefore, if any bystander is able to provide CPR and use an automated external defibrillator (AED), the victim stands a higher chance of surviving.

SOME COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CPR

- ▶ **CPR cannot be performed on pregnant women, young children and the elderly.** CPR should be administered on anyone who is unconscious with no breathing and no pulse, regardless of age or physical condition.
- ▶ **If I perform CPR incorrectly, I may kill the victim and get sued.** CPR will be of benefit to an unconscious person, whether it is performed perfectly or not. As long as your intentions are lawful when assisting someone, you will not be charged for trying to save a life. As stated on the R-AEDi — an initiative by SHF and the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) — website, no good Samaritan in Singapore has ever been sued for trying to save a life using CPR.
- ▶ **I cannot do anything if I am not trained to perform CPR.** Untrained bystanders can still help by doing compression-only CPR. You can call 995 to seek the operator's guidance. Compression-only CPR, a variation of the standard CPR, will help to buy time before the ambulance arrives.
- ▶ **I have been CPR-certified several years ago so I don't have to attend any more CPR courses.** CPR certifications expire after two years because such skills should be reviewed and updated regularly. CPR guidelines in Singapore are governed by the National Resuscitation Council, which updates them based on the latest knowledge on effective CPR performance.

+ WHERE TO LEARN CPR

Register for the seven-hour Citizen First Responder Programme at the Singapore Red Cross Academy, at academy@redcross.sg. Alternatively, sign up for courses offered by the Singapore Heart Foundation (SHF). For more details, visit www.redcross.sg and www.myheart.org.sg.

Help An App Away

The myResponder mobile app alerts volunteers to cardiac arrest cases in public areas within 400 metres of their location, and also shows where the nearest AED is. Developed by the SCDF and the Info-communications Media Development Authority of Singapore (IMDA), the app can also be used to contact 995.



Spotlight

CORPORATE NEWS + EVENTS + FORUMS

BREAKING NEW GROUND

WHEN COMPLETED, THE NEW WOODLANDS HEALTH CAMPUS WILL PROVIDE ENHANCED QUALITY HEALTHCARE WITH FUTURE-READY FEATURES.



To meet Singapore's growing healthcare demands due to an ageing population, rising chronic diseases burden and manpower constraints, the Ministry of Health (MOH) — together with the various integrated clusters — has been taking steps to develop new and more effective ways of delivering seamless healthcare.

The 7.66-ha Woodlands Health Campus (WHC), which held its groundbreaking ceremony on 18 April 2017, is one such initiative. Soon to be part of the National Healthcare Group (NHG) network, it will be Singapore's first healthcare campus to fully integrate a general hospital, community hospital and nursing home as well as day-care facilities for seniors in a single development.

"This will enable patients to be treated and rehabilitated effectively in the appropriate setting, so that they can return home to their loved ones as soon as possible," said Health Minister Gan Kim Yong at the groundbreaking ceremony.

Above: The groundbreaking ceremony of WHC.

Right: A scale model of WHC.



WHC will enable patients to be treated and rehabilitated effectively in the appropriate setting, so that they can return home to their loved ones as soon as possible.

HEALTH MINISTER GAN KIM YONG



Left: Guests reviewing the design layout of WHC.

Below: NHG Chairman Mdm Kay Kuok explaining the key highlights of WHC to guests.



SMART APPROACH

WHC will raise the bar for patient care with the extensive use of SMART technology ranging from online services that patients can access from their homes to robotics that automate housekeeping tasks. “Beyond reducing or eliminating the non-core work of healthcare workers, technological tools such as data analytics and artificial intelligence can augment the care they provide, maximising patient outcomes at each touch point,” added Minister Gan.

A HEALING ENVIRONMENT

Beyond healthcare, WHC aims to be a space for health and healing. Green spots within the campus grounds such as the Healing Forest Garden and Therapeutic Gardens will aid patients’ recovery by supporting their mental, physical and emotional needs.

Dr Jason Cheah, Chairman of the Woodlands Health Campus Pro-Tem Planning Committee said, “We have designed WHC as a vibrant community hub where residents can engage in community activities within the open spaces and enjoy the healing effects of the gardens and the surrounding parkland. We hope the campus will become a vital and cherished asset for the communities we serve and for future generations to come.”

To ensure the continuum of care for patients after their discharge, WHC will develop a strong ecosystem with community care partners, including General Practitioners, Voluntary Welfare Organisations and other social networks.

WHC is targeted to open progressively from 2022.

We have designed WHC as a vibrant community hub where residents can engage in community activities within the open spaces and enjoy the healing effects of the gardens and the surrounding parkland.

DR JASON CHEAH, CHAIRMAN OF THE WOODLANDS HEALTH CAMPUS PRO-TEM PLANNING COMMITTEE



Left: Minister Gan Kim Yong planting a tree at the WHC site.

Below: Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure & Minister for Transport Khaw Boon Wan taking part in the tree-planting exercise.

Key areas that define WHC

DEVELOPMENT of a strong ecosystem for collaborative community care.

INTRODUCTION of SMART approaches to improve delivery of care to patients.

CREATION of green spaces to promote health and healing.





Top: Minister for Health Gan Kim Yong presenting the HHA award to TTSH nurse, Nur Shilawaty Jamaludin.

Left: President Dr Tony Tan and guests with the 98 HHA awardees.

TRIBUTE TO HEALTHCARE HEROES

TOP HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS, CAREGIVERS AND VOLUNTEERS WERE HONOURED AT THE ANNUAL HEALTHCARE HUMANITY AWARDS.

To acknowledge their dedication, effort and courage in caring for the sick — as well as in protecting and improving public health — 98 healthcare professionals, caregivers and volunteers were commended on 25 April 2017 at the Healthcare Humanity Awards (HHA). More than half the recipients came from the community care sector.

Among the winners, four individuals received the highest accolade ‘Honourable Mention’ from Guest-of-Honour and Patron of The Courage Fund, Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, President of the Republic of Singapore. They include prosthetist Mr Desmond Tong, who represented Singapore in the 100m sprint at the 2014 ASEAN Para Games.

At 22, Desmond was involved in a traffic accident that resulted in his right leg being amputated from below the knee. He overcame numerous setbacks and eventually trained and became a senior prosthetist/orthotist at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH). “As an amputee, being able to work with people with disabilities and helping them get back on their feet has brought great meaning and satisfaction to my life,” he said.

Congratulating the winners, Madam Kay Kuok, Chairman, Board of Directors, The Courage Fund, and Chairman, National Healthcare Group (NHG) said, “The distinctions between the various healthcare providers — whether from primary care, acute, tertiary to intermediate and long-term care, home and communities — blur when we gather together to honour these men and women who have chosen to serve patients as their life’s work.



Left: NHG Chairman Mdm Kay Kuok with Prof Philip Choo, GCEO, NHG, and NHG Senior Management and Staff.

Below: President Dr Tony Tan with recipients of the Honourable Mention award.



The award goes beyond the recognition of their contributions at their workplace. It honours their Courage, Compassion, Selflessness, Extraordinary Dedication and Humanity shown towards both our own population and beyond our shores.”

ABOUT HHA

The Healthcare Humanity Awards (HHA) was established 14 years ago to honour healthcare professionals who rose to their calling to fight against SARS in 2003. Since then, it continues the legacy of care and compassion, giving recognition to unsung heroes working in the various types of healthcare-providing institutions. 735 HHA awards have been given so far.

THE SMART WAY FORWARD

THE NATIONAL HEALTH IT SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTED HOW INTELLIGENT TECHNOLOGY CAN BE USED TO RAISE THE QUALITY OF HEALTHCARE.

In the past, information technology (IT) played a mostly supportive role in healthcare processes in the areas of patient administration, diagnosis and treatment. But all that is gradually changing, a fact that was highlighted at the National Health IT Summit, held at the Singapore Expo on 30 May 2017. At the summit, Minister of Health Gan Kim Yong announced that the use of 'smart technology' in healthcare will be further ramped up with new innovations such as robotic aids for home care, predictive data analytics to identify health risks, and telehealth platforms to remotely monitor patients' health. These advancements all come under the Health IT Master Plan, which was rolled out by the Ministry of Health (MOH) in 2014.

One example in particular is the Vital Signs Monitoring (VSM) platform that will be launched later this year. This telehealth system will enable the remote monitoring of vital signs such as blood pressure, blood glucose or the weight of patients with conditions such as hypertension, diabetes and heart or pulmonary diseases. This will in turn facilitate more regular monitoring, improve patient management, and reduce hospital visits and readmissions.

EXCELLENCE IN IT RECOGNISED

The National Health IT Excellence Awards were also given out during the Summit. The National Skin Centre (NSC)'s Tele-DERM programme won the *IT Excellence: Beyond Hospital to Community Award*. Tele-DERM is a physician-to-physician collaboration between NSC and National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP), which provides patients seen at NHGP timely access to specialist dermatological care (see page 47 for more information). Also recognised in the same category for its role in increasing nursing residents' access to geriatric care was



the Tele-Geriatrics programme by Khoo Teck Puat Hospital (KTPH).

The Enhanced ConviDose System with Medication Packing Engine clinched the *IT Excellence: Beyond Quality to Value Award*. The automated pharmacy system packs medicines with fewer errors than if done by humans, and is co-developed by National Healthcare Group Pharmacy (NHGPh), Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and Integrated Health Information Systems (IHIS).

Health Minister Gan Kim Yong delivering his opening speech at the National Health IT Summit.



From left: The NHG team with the IT Excellence Award for Enhanced ConviDose System.



The KTH team receiving the IT Excellence award for Tele-Geriatrics.



NSC receiving the IT Excellence award for Tele-DERM.

SUPER FUN!

THE NHG HQ FAMILY CELEBRATED ITS ANNUAL DINNER & DANCE IN SUPERHERO STYLE.

On 5 May 2017, more than 400 National Healthcare Group (NHG) HQ staff gathered at Swissotel Merchant Court dressed as their favourite superheroes for the NHG HQ Dinner and Dance. Themed ‘Heroes’, staff enjoyed games and performances, as well as networked with colleagues across departments.

One of the evening’s highlights was the presentation of the Long Service Awards (LSA) and Post-Retirement Gifts to 46 staff by NHG Chairman Madam Kay Kuok and NHG Deputy GCEO A/Prof Chua Hong Choon. Professor Chee Yam Cheng, President of NHG College and Emeritus Consultant of Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), received the LSA for 40 years of dedication in shaping Singapore’s public healthcare landscape.



Above and left: The heroes of NHG HQ.



Below: Staff making memories at the photo wall.



Left: The NHG Group Corp Comms team making a colourful statement with fruits and vegetables.

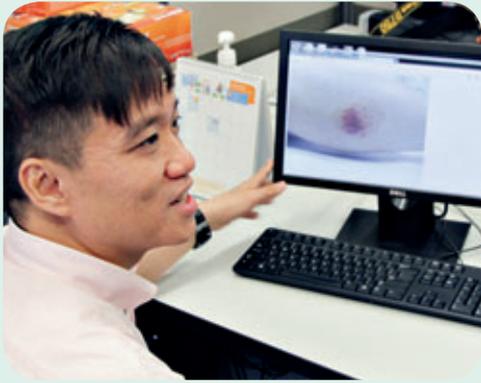
Below: NHG Deputy GCEO A/Prof Chua Hong Choon with NHG Chairman Mdm Kay Kuok.



A/Prof Chua concluded the Award Ceremony by thanking everyone at NHG, including colleagues from the institutions, for their hard work and commitment.

“As we move towards a new chapter in public healthcare with the recent re-clustering, we have been given the task to create a future-ready healthcare system to achieve Better Health, Better Care and Better Life. This means moving Beyond Hospital to Community, Beyond Healthcare to Health and Beyond Quality to Value,” he said. “Whether we serve in an administrative or clinical role, we have an important role in providing better care for our patients and the people of Singapore.”

Assessing a patient's skin condition through e-consult service, Tele-DERM.



TREATING SKIN VIA TECHNOLOGY

THE TELE-DERM E-CONSULTATION SERVICE BRINGS SPECIALIST DERMATOLOGICAL CARE CLOSER TO THE COMMUNITY.

Patients with less complex and non-urgent skin conditions such as acne, eczema or hives now have the option of being treated at a polyclinic nearer their homes instead of having to travel to the National Skin Centre (NSC).

This is made possible by Tele-DERM, an e-consult service, which was piloted at Hougang Polyclinic in January 2016 and rolled out to eight other National Healthcare Group (NHG) Polyclinics by last December. The service enables doctors to discuss skin care cases and treatment options with NSC dermatologists promptly and conveniently online. This reduces the need for patients to go for additional follow-up appointments at NSC. "About 300 appointment slots at the National Skin Centre have been freed up from January 2016 to April this year," said Associate Professor Tan Suat Hoon, Director of NSC, commenting on the service's effectiveness.

In addition, Tele-DERM lets patients receive dermatological care at NHG Polyclinics sooner. "The waiting time for patients with non-urgent cases to see a skin specialist at NSC has been reduced to about 40 days. This is about half the waiting time as compared to last year," said A/Prof Tan.

IT'S SHOWTIME!

STAFF FROM NSC BROUGHT MOVIE GLAMOUR TO ITS ANNUAL DINNER & DANCE.



Memorable movie characters came to life at the NSC Annual Dinner & Dance.

Bringing the magic of cinema to life, National Skin Centre (NSC) staff turned up as their favourite movie characters for their annual Dinner and Dance (D&D) on 20 May 2017 at One Farrer Hotel & Spa.

Opening the D&D was a group comprising members of the management committee and medical staff committee, who performed an entertaining rendition of Taylor Swift's 'Shake It Off'. More fun and laughter ensued as staff competed in games on stage and indulged in some 'cosplay' as they mingled in their elaborate get-ups. The evening ended with an enjoyable dance performance inspired by *The Lion King*, *Power Rangers* and *The Fast and The Furious: Tokyo Drift*.

Dr Teoh Hoon Cheow, Chairman of NSC's Health Endowment Fund, was named as NSC's Distinguished Friend of the Year during the D&D.



NSC staff performing as Beauty and the Beast (top) and the 'Power Rangers' (left) in the lively song-and-dance segment.

HAVING A VOICE AT WORK

THE NHG HOMER MEETING HOMOED IN ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEAKING UP AT THE WORKPLACE.

Speaking up is as important as listening in. This was the message that Associate Professor Michael Ramsay Bashshur from Singapore Management University conveyed at the NHG HOMER (Health Outcomes and Medical Education Research) Meeting held on 20 April 2017 at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH). The lecture, which focused on organisational justice, power and employee voice, was attended by staff from the National Healthcare Group (NHG).

Although not easy to implement, 'organisational justice' — or the perception of fairness at the workplace — does produce positive outcomes and employee satisfaction in organisations, said A/Prof Bashshur. He stressed that when employees speak up, they must be in a psychologically-safe environment where they would not be penalised for voicing their concerns or opinions.

Dr Mary Lee, Senior Research Analyst at HOMER, who co-hosted the meeting, elaborated with "Whether staff de-privatise their thoughts or not depends on their relationships with their teams and leaders and on contextual factors such as seniority and the hierarchy among the professions. Leaders must bear in mind that these factors can encourage or hinder staff from speaking up."



A/Prof Michael Ramsay Bashshur giving his talk on "Voice, Justice and Power – Employee Voice in the Workplace".



From left: Dr Arjun Kalyanpur, CEO of Teleradiology Solutions with Ms Lim Soh Har, NHGD Executive Director and A/Prof Quek Swee Tian, NHGD Clinical Advisor (Radiology).

DIGITAL REVOLUTION

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IMAGING TECHNOLOGY IN QUALITY HEALTHCARE HIGHLIGHTED AT RADIOLOGYASIA 2017.

Held at the Singapore Expo on 19 to 20 May 2017, RadiologyAsia 2017 saw more than 800 professionals share their experiences in the latest technologies and techniques, as well as network with one another.

Dr Arjun Kalyanpur, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Teleradiology Solutions, presented an overview of Teleradiology and how it supports cross-border reporting. NHG Diagnostics (NHGD) partnered Teleradiology Solutions in 2004 to roll out the first teleradiology service in Singapore. The implementation of online radiology reading services across all NHGD imaging centres has since reduced the reporting turnaround time to within an hour.

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National Healthcare Group is a Regional Health System for Singapore. NHG collaborates with Hospitals, Specialty Centres, Polyclinics, Patients, Caregivers, Partners, Volunteers and the Community to **Add Years of Healthy Life** to the nation.



STARS FOR HEALTH

Health is Wealth

Eat Wisely

Eating well is fundamental to well-being – physical, psychological and social health.



National Healthcare Group is a Regional Health System for Singapore. NHG collaborates with Hospitals, Specialty Centres, Polyclinics, Patients, Caregivers, Partners, Volunteers and the Community to **Add Years of Healthy Life** to the nation.

