

MEDIA RELEASE

KHATIB POLYCLINIC OFFICIALLY OPENS: STRENGTHENING PREVENTIVE CARE IN THE PRIMARY HEALTHCARE ECOSYSTEM

Khatib Polyclinic rolls out new initiatives to promote preventive health and ageing well

Singapore, 13 May 2024 – The National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) officially opened its ninth polyclinic, Khatib Polyclinic, officiated by Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health, to meet the growing healthcare needs of both the elderly and the younger population in the area. Khatib Polyclinic will offer holistic services, providing acute primary care, chronic care, preventive care, women and child health services, as well as dental services.

2 Professor Joe Sim, Group Chief Executive Officer, National Healthcare Group (NHG) said, “The opening of Khatib Polyclinic marks a significant milestone in our commitment to raise NHG’s capacity and capabilities in primary care in Central and North Singapore. The planning of this polyclinic, from infrastructure to the provision of care services, reflects NHGP’s ongoing pursuit to provide quality, person-centred and holistic care, with increasing focus on preventive health. Khatib Polyclinic is well-supported by the rest of NHG, including our hospitals and national specialty centres, working in unison with NHGP to innovate care and address the diverse needs of the population for better health outcomes. I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to our GPs and community partners in this region for their support of our vision to empower, engage, and motivate patients and residents to take charge of their health for more healthy and happy years.”

3 Commenting on the polyclinic’s population health initiative, Dr Karen Ng, Chief Executive Officer, NHGP and Chief, Primary Care, NHG said, “As the lead primary care provider for residents living in the Central and North Singapore, we want our residents to not only live longer, but also live well and age well. At NHGP, we manage our patients holistically so that they can achieve a good quality of life. We work closely with the General Practitioners and other partners in the community to build an ecosystem to promote preventive health amongst our patients and residents.”

Strengthening Preventive Health

4 With an ageing population and the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, NHGP adopts a multi-pronged approach by providing comprehensive care, and fostering partnerships with General Practitioners (GPs) and community partners to drive population health. This approach is core to NHGP’s efforts in improving population health through a

proactive preventive care approach to delay the onset of chronic diseases, and is aligned with the focus of the national *Healthier SG* initiative.

Supporting Mental Wellness

5 NHGP provides holistic and comprehensive care including mental health. Since October 2012, NHGP has been managing patients with mild, moderate and moderately-severe mental health issues via its Health and Mind Service (HMS). Through HMS, NHGP improved its capability in mental health care by enhancing mental health education and training among its clinicians, and collaborating with tertiary psychiatric services such as Institute of Mental Health and Khoo Teck Puat Hospital.

6 Apart from its Health and Mind Service catered for adults, NHGP extended its mental health service to youths aged 13 to 17 years old via **ALERT, which stands for AdoLescent Evaluation and Rapid Treatment of Mental Health** programme in April 2023, funded under the Child and Maternal Health and Well-Being (CAMH) Strategy and Action Plan. Under the ALERT programme, doctors are opportunistically screening for psychosocial issues such as depression, anxiety and insomnia, while medical social workers provide risk assessments, counselling and case management for identified patients.

7 To further expand its clinical capabilities, NHGP has started a collaboration with KK Women's and Children's Hospital to develop a programme supporting youths presenting with psychosomatic symptoms. Termed **RECAP@NHGP, or Resilience in Children and Adolescents with Psychosomatic Symptoms**, the programme under the CAMH Strategy and Action Plan, is a stepped care approach to early assessment of psychosomatic symptoms, intervention and right siting of patients to appropriate support. Youths who present with symptoms such as recurrent headaches, abdominal pain and chest pain will be evaluated by the doctors and may be referred into the RECAP@NHGP programme where psychosocial support is given through psychoeducation and counselling.

8 Aligned to the recommendation from the Interagency Taskforce on Mental Health and Well-being (TMW) to implement the Tiered Care Model that caters to individuals with varying levels of mental health needs, the ALERT and RECAP@NHGP healthcare teams work closely with the Youth Intervention Team (YIT), school counsellors and psychiatrists to manage youths with mental health issues. Youths with mild and moderate mental health issues will be supported by NHGP's medical social worker and may be connected with community support such as YIT and school counsellors while youths with severe mental health conditions will be referred to the psychiatrist.

Building Relationships with GPs

9 Recognising the importance of working closely with General Practitioner (GP) partners to successfully support residents in living and ageing well, NHGP will support NHG Central-North Primary Care Network's (CN-PCN) GPs by extending NHGP's **RELATE or RELationship-based health and social inTegration** programme to their clinics. With the RELATE programme implemented at GP clinics, GPs are able to identify the unique needs of complex patients through a holistic assessment of the patients' health and social challenges. GPs will be able to connect the patients with NHG Community Health Teams (CHTs) through CN-PCN's primary care coordinator.

10 Patient care is anchored by the CHT nurse who acts as a health buddy and health-social integrator to the patients throughout their healthcare journey. The CHT nurse looks after the GP's patients according to their individual needs and empowers and motivates them in their health journey. The CHT nurse will serve as a single point of contact for patient, and help the patient navigate between their GP and community partners and access community resources offering exercise and wellness programmes.

Providing Dental Services

11 Besides medical care, oral health is pivotal in the multidisciplinary care of patients at the primary care level. With an ageing population, NHGP sees more cases of elderly patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. These patients may be at an increased risk for oral complications and adverse health outcomes.

12 NHGP's Dental Services prioritise prevention, early detection and timely intervention of oral diseases. The dental clinic at Khatib Polyclinic features comprehensive facilities, including digital in-room x-rays to minimise patient transfers and air filtration systems to reduce the risk of infection transmission. Additionally, the dental clinic is equipped with a wheelchair tilter paired with an ambidextrous dental chair, ensuring that patients with mobility issues and impaired movement can receive dental care in an optimised treatment position.

Ageing Well Initiatives

13 In tandem with the national Age Well SG initiative, Khatib Polyclinic is focusing its efforts on keeping seniors physically, socially and mentally active. The team has been proactively engaging the Active Ageing Centres (AACs) in the vicinity, to connect its patients to the suite of programmes offered by the centres.

14 The collaboration with AACs involves partnering the centres for NHGP's social prescription programme, **ENRICH** or **ENgaging and empoweRIng our Community for better Health**, to improve the patient's health through social and lifestyle interventions. Piloted at Khatib Polyclinic, the ENRICH programme targets patients who are well and/or with stable chronic conditions. Clinical team will actively encourage them to use online resources such as the *Health Kampung* on the NHG Cares app or the Healthy 365 app, which offer a wide range of health and social programmes that patients can enrol in to achieve their health goals. Doctors will also encourage seniors to participate in activities offered by neighbouring community partners such as Goodlife Studio (Yishun) (Active Ageing Centre), SASCO@Khatib (Singapore Amalgamated Services Co-operative Organisation), among others, to keep them physically active, socially engaged and emotionally healthy.

15 Another aspect in the care of elderly patients is the prevention of falls. Falls are common in the elderly. Patients with a history of falls may have undiagnosed osteoporosis which increases the risk of hip fractures, a common cause for disability.

16 To reduce the risk of falls and fractures in elderly patients, Khatib Polyclinic piloted the falls prevention and osteoporosis screening programme known as **SAFE** or **Screening, Agility, Frailty and Falls prevention, and Empowerment** programme, targeting patients aged 65 years and above with a history of falls. Comprising advance practice nurses, care managers, care coordinators and doctors, the multidisciplinary team will identify, assess and provide intervention for these patients, and offer bone mineral density screening to those who

are at risk of osteoporosis. Khatib Polyclinic has partnered St Luke's ElderCare (SLEC), referring at-risk fallers to SLEC's Day Rehabilitation Centre for fall prevention exercise programmes.

17 Apart from caring for patients, it is important to strengthen support for caregivers to ensure their well-being is taken care of. Khatib Polyclinic has collaborated with SG Assist's Caregiver Resource Centre, offering comprehensive support for caregivers and empowering them with knowledge and resources to care for their elderly family members. Upcoming plans include talks at NHGP's Health Studio where caregivers will be taught how to incorporate senior-friendly home technology and hands-on tips to better care for the seniors at home.

Outreach and Educational Efforts

18 To further encourage the adoption of healthy lifestyle habits, the Community Plaza and the Health Studio at Khatib Polyclinic will be used as a community space to activate patients and residents for health. Health promotion activities will be conducted regularly. These will include healthy cooking workshops, interactive exercise programmes, talks on mental health and stress management, as well as frailty and fall prevention among seniors. Located adjacent to each other, the Community Plaza and the Health Studio provide a unique extensible space to facilitate Khatib Polyclinic's health outreach efforts.

19 Recognising that some underserved communities may face health challenges in dental care, Khatib Polyclinic is partnering the nearby Rainbow Centre Yishun Park School to organise educational talks for the students at the school. The healthcare team will educate these students with disabilities on the importance of oral health, covering topics such as oral health maintenance.

Strengthening Community Bonds

20 At today's event, Mr Masagos also launched a community artpiece made up of more than 19,000 LEGO® elements. Titled "Building Blocks for Good Health", the artpiece was built by Khatib Polyclinic staff, Nee Soon South residents and grassroots leaders, Goodlife Studio (Yishun) (Active Ageing Centre) members, Patient Advisory Council (PAC) members, NHGP management and staff. It featured Khatib Polyclinic as the heartbeat of the community, uniting healthcare, residents and patients towards the shared purpose of holistic health and wellness.

21 To ensure that the services and facilities provided at Khatib Polyclinic are patient-centric, the Patient Advisory Council (PAC) was set up for patient volunteers to contribute feedback. Beyond sharing feedback and insights on improvements, the PAC also co-creates and co-designs solutions from the patients' perspectives with the clinic management team. The PAC members, including patient representatives living in the Khatib and Yishun area have provided helpful comments and suggestions to improve wayfinding and signages in the clinic during its development phase to better meet the needs of our patients ranging from new parents with newborns to elderly patients on mobility aids.

Conclusion

22. Dr Gabriel Ding, Family Physician, Consultant, and Head of Khatib Polyclinic shared, "With the opening of Khatib Polyclinic, residents now enjoy comprehensive health services

closer to their homes. This includes a new dental clinic in the neighbourhood. We look forward to partnering residents and patients of all ages to proactively manage their health.”

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About National Healthcare Group Polyclinics

National Healthcare Group Polyclinics (NHGP) forms the primary healthcare arm of the National Healthcare Group (NHG). Its nine polyclinics serve a significant proportion of the population in the central and northern regions of Singapore.

NHGP provides a comprehensive range of health services for the family, functioning as a one-stop health service centre providing treatment for acute medical conditions, management of chronic diseases, women & children services and dental care. The focus of NHGP’s care is on health promotion and disease prevention, early and accurate diagnosis, disease management through physician led team-based care as well as enhancing the capability of Family Medicine through research and teaching.

Through the Family Medicine Academy and the NHG Family Medicine Residency Programme, NHGP plays an integral role in the delivery of primary care training at medical undergraduate and post-graduate levels. With the Primary Care Academy, NHGP provides training to caregivers and other primary care counterparts in the community sector.

More information is available at www.nhgp.com.sg.