

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint statement of support by public healthcare clusters SingHealth, National Healthcare Group and National University Health System:

Abuse and harassment of healthcare workers is a prevalent issue in the healthcare setting which affects the well-being of our staff. Such behaviour is unacceptable and taken seriously at our institutions. It is important that we ensure a safe and conducive working environment for our healthcare workers who do their best to care for patients every day.

2 SingHealth, the National Healthcare Group (NHG) and the National University Health System (NUHS) welcome the findings by the Tripartite Workgroup (TWG) for the Prevention of Abuse and Harassment of Healthcare Workers. We strongly support the recommendations put forth by the TWG, and will work together with the TWG on the development of a standardised zero-tolerance policy for abuse across all public healthcare clusters.

3 The TWG's recommendation for a standardised policy across all public healthcare clusters is in line with our clusters' zero tolerance stance towards abuse of our staff. While there are currently protocols in place across our institutions to support our staff, the standardised policy will strengthen staff protection by reinforcing the channels available for reporting and escalation, as well as increasing awareness of the consequences of such undesirable behaviour when it happens.

4 In addition to existing protocols, our institutions have been actively building a culture that supports staff in reporting and standing up against abuse and harassment:

- At SingHealth, we believe that our patients and their caregivers are our strongest advocates and partners in preventing abuse and harassment of healthcare workers, and have been working together to foster a culture of kindness in the healthcare setting. For example, the SingHealth Patient Advocacy Network (SPAN), which comprises healthcare professionals and members of the public (including patients and caregivers), has come forward to speak up against abuse and harassment publicly via the media and social media since late 2021. We continue to work in close partnership with patients and caregivers towards establishing a deeper understanding and more open communication, with the aim of cultivating a safe and respectful healthcare environment. We also have in place peer support and staff wellness initiatives, such as the SingHealth Staff Care Centre which provides counselling and peer support services, to ensure that staff get the help that they need when they face difficulties at work. As part of our overall goal of a happy and safe workplace, SingHealth's Joy at Work Taskforce and Staff Well-being Council focus on strategies to better support our staff and boost well-being.
- NHG is committed to zero tolerance towards abuse and harassment of our staff who work hard every day to provide best care to our patients and the population we serve. We have networks such as the Staff Protection Committee that ensures NHG remains a safe workplace for all employees, and a Workplace Health and Safety Workgroup, and Staff Wellbeing Committee, which promote staff wellness and build mental

resilience. We are also working with our community of partners, patients, patient advocates, and volunteers on more effective ways to better understand and communicate with one another to provide care. We consider any incident of abuse and harassment as one too many, and will continue to reinforce across all our institutions that we take such incidents seriously. Everyone must play a part in ensuring a safe and respectful environment for working and for healing to take place.

- At NUHS, we have a framework that covers education, training, case escalation process, peer support, and counselling. Our staff protection programme includes equipping staff with the know-how to respond and de-escalate staff abuse situations. Staff are also encouraged to speak up when they are abused, and to seek help and support one another during such incidents. A warning, in the form of a Code of Conduct agreement that reserves our institutions the right to refuse non-emergency medical treatment and revoke visitation rights, may be issued to abusive patients and visitors who display disruptive behaviours. Legal recourse may be taken against perpetrators who are egregious and continue to behave in an unacceptable manner.

5 As we work towards developing the standardised zero-tolerance policy for abuse with the TWG, we continue to seek the public's patience and cooperation to provide a safe environment for our healthcare workers.

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