PRESS RELEASE

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TTSH and NHGP Provide Better Dementia Care in the Community
Hospital’s Dementia Care Network with NHG Partners within Region will Enhance Support for Patients and Caregivers

In Singapore, there are more than 22,000 people over the age of 65 with dementia. As the population ages, the number is set to increase to about 70,000 within the next 15 years¹. To address this growing need, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has invested in building medical capability for assessment and management of dementia, as well as greater community support for care of persons with dementia.

¹ Source: Alzheimer’s Disease International Asia Pacific report

In line with the Ministry’s efforts to address the concerns of caregivers and patients with dementia, Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) announced the Geriatric Integrated Network for Dementia (GerIND) at its annual World Alzheimer’s Week event on 22 September. The network has been driving collaborative partnerships amongst like-minded organisations in the Central Region of Singapore, and allows for training and capability building for community-based healthcare professionals, enabling them to better care for patients with dementia in the community.

A Multi-Disciplinary Approach in the Community
The GerIND first started as a partnership with Ang Mo Kio (AMK) Polyclinic, with the pilot of a new multi-disciplinary, Family Physician-led model of shared care in the community that is supported by TTSH. Patients suitable to be cared for within the community are first discharged from the hospital to the AMK National Healthcare Group Polyclinics’ (NHGP) Dementia Clinic. The multidisciplinary team of doctors, social workers, and psychologists from both institutions work together through regular meetings and sharing of experiences and expertise to ensure that these patients can remain well in the community without the need for hospital intervention.
Since its inception in 2012, about 150 patients have been discharged to the AMK NHGP Dementia Clinic for continued care, with another 150 discharged to eight other NHGPs. This marks a 20% increase in dementia care capacity and access, and with more dedicated help available in the heartlands, TTSH has seen a 10% increase in new patients receiving diagnosis.

In addition, the team at the AMK NHGP Dementia Clinic will soon start to evaluate new cases of dementia. AMK NHGP doctors can refer patients directly to the AMK NHGP Dementia Clinic for assessment instead of to TTSH, allowing patients to be seen within a familiar, more convenient environment. Through these initiatives, TTSH will have greater capacity to see more new and complex cases.

“These results are very encouraging. While dementia is a progressive disease, appropriate dedicated medical care to affected persons with dementia, depending on their care needs, at various points of their condition will help them stay healthier. This ‘many helping hands’ approach with diverse partners is the core philosophy adopted by GerIND, with the ultimate aim to provide person-centred care. The network also aims to maintain a good quality of life for persons with dementia, and provide support for their families and caregivers,” explained Dr Chong Mei Sian, GerIND Programme Director and Senior Consultant, Department of Geriatric Medicine, TTSH.

The interim results of a study by the Health Services and Outcomes Research (HSOR) unit, NHG’s research arm, has shown that patients discharged from TTSH to the AMK NHGP Dementia Clinic required fewer hospital visits, with savings in direct medical costs, day-care, and indirect costs like time spent by caregivers. Caregivers also reported significantly less stress.

**General Practitioners and Like-Minded Partners Pivotal to GerIND**

The GerIND has expanded to involve other key partners in the medical and social sectors including the Care for the Elderly Foundation (CEF), General Practitioners (GPs) in Singapore’s central region, and the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC).

As dementia can be progressive, it can be increasingly challenging for patients with deteriorating functions to be brought to the polyclinics or the hospital for follow ups. CEF’s Code 4 Home Care programme provides homebound patients with advanced dementia more timely access to care and addresses pertinent end of life issues in a comfortable home setting. Temasek Cares – Project Dignity sees TTSH synergise with Dover Park Hospice and the Temasek Foundation to delicately balance both medical and social care for patients in their final months.

To further support and enhance the shared care model, there is continued work by GerIND to engage a network of private General Practitioners (GPs). This will further allow persons with dementia to have
better coordinated care in the community. Where necessary, those who require tertiary services can be rapidly referred back to TTSH through a streamlined process to ensure timely support for patients.

To ensure more seamless integration between social care and medical care, GerIND is also collaborating with community partners like AIC to provide support for GPs, as well as more intensive support for frail older persons in the community at risk of cognitive and functional decline.

In addition, the team at TTSH’s Institute of Geriatrics and Active Ageing (IGA) conducts delirium and dementia education courses for healthcare professionals in the community, to equip them with the skills to care for persons with dementia.

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For more information, please contact:

**Ms Bernadette Chong**
Executive, Corporate Communications
Tan Tock Seng Hospital
Phone: 6357 8410
Mobile: 9828 7025
Email: Bernadette_KF_Chong@ttsh.com.sg

**Ms Lydia Soh**
Assistant Manager, Group Corporate Communications
National Healthcare Group
Phone: 6496 6947
Mobile: 9842 8571
Email: Lydia_CC_Soh@nhg.com.sg

**ABOUT TAN TOCK SENG HOSPITAL (TTSH)**

TTSH is one of Singapore’s largest multi-disciplinary hospitals with 171 years of pioneering medical care and development. The hospital has 40 clinical, allied health and pharmacy departments as well as 16 specialist centres. It also has three institutes that are spearheading care, research and innovations in geriatric medicine, infectious diseases and ophthalmology. Powered by more than 7,000 healthcare staff, TTSH sees over 2,000 patients at its specialist clinics and some 460 patients at its emergency department every day. TTSH is part of the National Healthcare Group, providing holistic and integrated patient care.

With a strong quality culture steeped in patient safety, TTSH constantly challenges itself to provide faster, better, cheaper and safer care for patients. To achieve this, the hospital keeps abreast and believes in investing in its staff, facilities, medical technology and system improvements. In recognition of its commitment to excellent patient care and its comprehensive range of quality healthcare services, TTSH has been awarded the ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 certification as well as the prestigious Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation.

**ABOUT NATIONAL HEALTHCARE GROUP (NHG)**
NHG is a leader in public healthcare in Singapore, recognised at home and abroad for the quality of its medical expertise and facilities. Care is provided through an integrated network of nine primary healthcare polyclinics, acute care hospital, national specialty centres, and business divisions. Together they bring a rich legacy of medical expertise to our philosophy of patient-centric care.

NHG’s vision of “Adding years of healthy life” is more than just about healing the sick. It encompasses the more difficult but infinitely more rewarding task of preventing illness and preserving health and quality of life. With some 13,000 staff, NHG aims to provide care that is patient-centric, accessible, seamless, comprehensive, appropriate and cost-effective.

As the Regional Health System (RHS) for Central Singapore, it is vital for NHG to partner and collaborate with other stakeholders, community advisors, volunteer welfare organisations and others in this Care Network together with our patients, their families and caregivers to deliver integrated healthcare services and programmes that help in Adding Years of Healthy Life to all concerned. More information is available at http://www.nhg.com.sg